

# Saipan Tribune

CNMI'S FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER

Volume XIV, Issue No. 058

FRIDAY FEBRUARY 27, 2004

www.saipantribune.com 50¢

## INSIDE



### Illegal Pumps

Acting Governor Diego Benavente joined members of the Commonwealth Utilities Corp.'s leak detection team yesterday for an inspection of water lines in western Garapan. What they discovered was not good.

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### Haiti Violence

U.S. Marines escorted foreigners out of the country amid widespread looting Wednesday, but the rebel leader said the insurgents want to "give a chance to peace" and indicated his troops would hold off attacking the capital.

Page 31



### Powerful 'Passion'

The people streaming out of the movie theater looked as if they'd just attended a wake—and many said they felt as if they had.

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CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Gov. Juan N. Babauta, far right, was among the 28 governors who greeted President Bush at the Republican Governors Association Gala in Washington D.C. this week. The President delivered what is being described as his first campaign speech to thousands at the Washington Convention Center.

## NGA backs NMI's delegate bid

In preparation for this week's hearing on the potential for a Northern Marianas delegate in Congress, Gov. Juan N. Babauta has succeeded in having the National Governor Association renew its support for the grant of such a status.

"I am very grateful for the support



Northern Marianas," said Babauta after the vote approving the delegate policy. "I'm particularly grateful to Governors Association chairman Dirk Kempthorne.

the nation's governors have shown for the people of the Northern Marianas."

Because of his previous experience as a member of the U.S. Senate committee with responsibility for the U.S. insular areas, Governor Kempthorne understands the issue of representation for the Northern Marianas."

The association is composed of all 55 U.S. governors, representing the 50 states

and the five non-State areas of American Samoa, Guam, the Northern Marianas, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands.

The governors' endorsement is particularly well-timed as Babauta, Washington Rep. Pedro A. Tenorio, and Senate President Joaquin G. Adriano

See NGA on Page 8

## 'No need for oversight hearing on NMC'

By MARIAN A. MARAYA  
REPORTER

House Education Committee chairman Justo Quitugua said yesterday that he has no plans to subject the Northern Marianas College to an oversight hearing, despite information he gathered confirming the institution's serious financial woes.

"We're not going to do an oversight. We

want to give the college more opportunity to refocus," said Quitugua.

The lawmaker pointed out that it has become a practice that, whenever a big problem arises, affected agencies



Quitugua

have a tendency to throw the problem to the Legislature for it to help solve the problem.

"What we want to do is not go on an oversight. I don't believe in an oversight hearing. I believe in working closer with NMC and helping them where I can help them. But we, as legislators, [are] not going to go there and tell them what to

See NO on Page 8

## Automatic granting of VEP for select group pushed

By JOHN RAVELO  
REPORTER

Citing the need for competitiveness in the global tourism and business markets, the Saipan Chamber of Commerce said it wants the CNMI to grant automatic

approval of Visitor Entry Permits to travelers with valid U.S. visas and visas from U.S.-favored nations.

SCC president Alex Sablan also aired concerns on the proposal to impose fees in connection with the processing of VEPs.

Under the proposal, a VEP applicant pays \$20 to process an application filed at least seven days before the expected arrival date in the CNMI. If it is filed less than seven days before arrival, the fee becomes \$40. The proposed amendment

See AUTOMATIC on Page 8

## Retention system eyed to filter runoff to Saipan lagoon

By JOHN RAVELO  
REPORTER

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is in the process of designing a bio-filter retention system that will filter nonpoint source pollution before stormwater runoff flows into the lagoon.

Coastal Resources Management Office's Benny Pangelinan disclosed

See RETENTION on Page 8



Local

Judge nixes reduced sentence plea

By JOHN RAVELO  
REPORTER

The Superior Court has denied the request of a convicted rapist to reduce his 15-year prison term, saying he would be eligible anyway for parole after a little over four years.

Associate Judge David Wiseman, who had imposed the maximum penalty for sexual assault in the first degree against Gabriel Grogthog, turned down the reduction request, noting that the defendant would be eligible for parole after serving four years and three months in jail.

In meting out the prison term

against Grogthog, Wiseman had called the acts of the defendant barbaric and outrageous.

Grogthog had kidnapped a woman, beat her up and sodomized her about two years ago. He was convicted based on a plea agreement with the Attorney General’s Office. Of his 15-year prison term, the judge only suspended two years.

“In view of the parole factor, the court believes the sentence in this matter should remain as it is,” the judge said.

Court records showed that Grogthog, together with Oscar Meeyog, had abducted a woman on Aug. 24, 2002. Inside a

vehicle, Grogthog kicked and punched the victim, making her lose consciousness.

The two brought the victim to a pavilion when she regained consciousness. At the pavilion, the two held her down at knifepoint and tore her clothes. As Meeyog held the woman’s arms, Grogthog began raping and sodomizing her repeatedly at knifepoint.

Grogthog threatened to kill the victim if she tells anyone about the incident. But the victim managed to escape and ran to the streets naked to find safety.

Originally, the AGO charged Grogthog and Meeyog with a total of 43 criminal charges.

These include kidnapping, false arrest, conspiracy, sexual assault in the first and second degrees, assault with a dangerous weapon, aggravated assault, assault and battery and disturbing the peace.

The AGO agreed to have the remaining charges dismissed against Grogthog when he pleaded guilty to sexual assault in the first degree.

Meeyog pleaded guilty to the same offense and an additional conspiracy charge. The court sentenced him to eight years imprisonment, two years of which were suspended. The court ruled that the six-year jail term was without parole.

Three establishments cited for violating sanitation standards

The Bureau of Environmental Health has closed down two eating and drinking establishments and one illegal vendor due to serious violations of health and sanitation standards.

The Guang Zhou Restaurant in Garapan was closed down on Jan. 27 but has since re-opened on Jan. 29, 2004. The Oceanside Bar & Grill was also closed down on Feb. 6. Anita B. Rosete/R.C. Mafnas Taxi #957 was closed down for being an illegal vendor.

The bureau said there may have been changes to these grades since the date this information was released.

The sanitary inspections were conducted during the week of Jan. 25, 2004 to Feb. 7, 2004.

Other establishments inspected and their respective grades were:

**Grade “A”**

1. ABCD Market, Koblerville
2. Golden Harvest Restaurant, Susupe

3. Greenpia Market, Chalan Kanoa
4. Moon Night Club, Chalan Kanoa
5. Tai Hu Shark’s Fin Seafood Restaurant, Chalan Kanoa
6. Boss Music Karaoke Box, Chalan Kanoa
7. Ping Sports Bar, Chalan Kanoa
8. Chapino’s Restaurant, Chalan Kanoa
9. Subway Chalan Piao, Chalan Piao

10. Palm Pool Bar (Hotel Riviera), Fina Sisu
11. New Mart, Chalan Laulau
12. Pure Water Supplies, Chalan Laulau
13. Pizza Hut Restaurant, Gualo Rai
14. Bostonian Bakery, Gualo Rai
15. Chingie’s Catering, Gualo Rai
16. Sea Tonino’s, Garapan
17. Kimichi Cabana Night Club, Garapan
18. Micronesian Night Club, Garapan
19. VFW Club Bar & Restaurant, Garapan
20. 99 Cents (Butcher Shop), Garapan
21. Kaizoku Restaurant, Garapan
22. Star Dust Club, Garapan
23. Moby Dick Restaurant, Garapan
24. Brother’s Market, Kagman

- Grade “B”**
1. Jin Store, Dandan
  2. Miramar BBQ Stand, San Vicente
  3. Riviera Resort Restaurant (Hotel Riviera), Fina Sisu
  4. Golden Lobster Restaurant, Susupe
  5. Wallace Theatre Snack Bar, San Jose
  6. Sushi Land Restaurant, Gualo Rai
  7. 99 Cents Super Market, Garapan
  8. Beach Garden Restaurant, Garapan
  9. New Arirang Restaurant, Garapan
  10. Latte Café Restaurant, Garapan
  11. Seoul One Restaurant, Garapan
  12. Chung Gi Wa Restaurant, Garapan
  13. Kim’s Market, Navy Hill

- Grade “C”**
- None
- For updated information, call the Bureau of Environmental Health at 664-4870 or fax 664-4871.

nikko

diabetes  
+red



# House gears up for its first session

By **MARIAN A. MARAYA**  
REPORTER

A slew of bills, local bills and resolutions have been prefiled at the House Clerk’s office, totaling 16 as of Thursday morning in anticipation of the first regular House session that is just three days away.

The legislative measures—which largely deals with appropriation for pending projects—were mostly submitted by returning members, most of them congressmen belonging to the Republican minority that had dominated the 13th House of Representatives.

House Clerk Evelyn Fleming confirmed to reporters yesterday that more bills are expected to be filed, especially on the session day itself, which is Feb. 9.

Other members are reportedly still finalizing bills they are poised to introduce. One member is reportedly planning to float as many as 20 measures on Monday.

Asked what can be expected on the 14th House’s very first session, Vice Speaker Timothy

Villagomez yesterday said: “A variety of things.”

“The leadership has been meeting. But what’s more important is that the leadership...has been meeting with some of the agencies for the last couple of weeks and getting input from them. Like I said, we want to hear from them on what the Legislature can do to assist the departments.

“That’s what’s been keeping us busy and a lot of the bills that we’ll be introducing is a result of the efforts from both agencies and Legislature. So it’s not just one-sided,” said Villagomez.

The Covenant-ruled House will convene for a regular session for the first time on Monday, alongside one Democrat member, seven Republicans and one independent member.

Despite the different party affiliations, the vice speaker expressed optimism that cooperation will rule in this Legislature.

“I think everyone of us has a common goal and that’s to help. And that’s always been my philosophy and I’m sure that once we go to the chamber,

everyone is going to look at the common good of why we’re here,” said Villagomez.

The prefiled bills are mostly the same measures that never made it through the previous Legislature.

Among them are House Bill 14-1 by Rep. Joe Guerrero which seeks to appropriate \$5.58 million for 702 CIP Covenant funding for certain CIP in FY03; and HB 14-2 by Rep. David Apatang and other minority members, which

appropriates \$1.5 million for various CIP projects in the three senatorial districts.

Other prefiled House bills include those by Rep. Benjamin Seman: the proposed Nursing Practice Act, Tobacco Settlement Escrow Enforcement Act, Domestic Violence Act, Anti-Stalking Act, sin tax appropriation, Inhalant Abuse

Act and the Commonwealth Respite Service Program.

Rep. Norman Palacios has put forward four bills, including the proposed Tinian Marine Reserve Act; the appropriation of \$575,000 for the Tinian museum; and the proposal to authorize the commercial operation of amusement machines at CNMI’s seaports and airports.

Note: with mug of Tim Villagomez.

dehins kasya

conwood

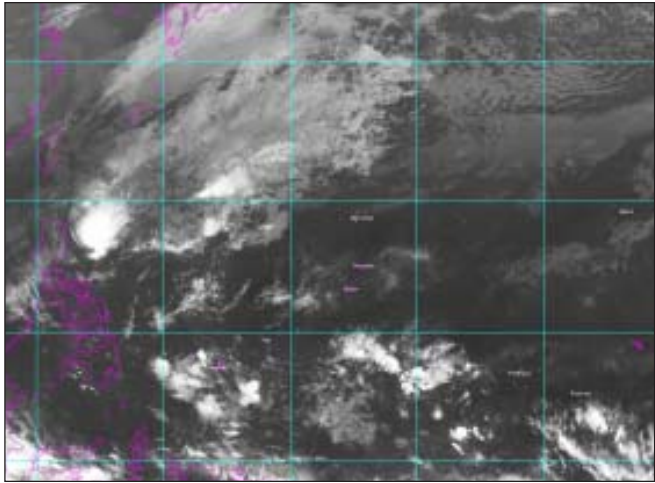
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mcdo



WEATHER FORECAST



PICTURE TIME: 1:00 A.M., FEBRUARY 26, 2004  
Western North Pacific between Equator and 25N from 130E to 180.

A weak trough extends from 1n134e to 2n152e to eq160e. Scattered showers are found along and north of the trough axis...between 1n and 9n from 131e to 157e...including Palau...Yap and Chuuk. Trade-wind convergence is producing scattered showers between the equator and 4n from 160e to 175e. This includes Tarawa but is south of Kosrae and Majuro. A weak trough is producing scattered showers several hundred miles west of the Marianas...within 75 miles of a line from 20n132e to 15n132e to 11n136e. A cold front extends from 25n162e to 23n154e to 21n145e then continues as a shear line from there to 20n145e to around 19n133e. Extensive cloudiness and widespread light rain and showers are found along and up to 150 miles north of this boundary.

**SAIPAN AND TINIAN**  
Partly cloudy with isolated showers.  
**Winds:** East at 15-20 mph. Highs near 86.

**GUAM AND ROTA**  
Partly cloudy with isolated showers.  
**Winds:** East at 15-20 mph. Highs near 86.

**PALAU**  
Mostly cloudy with isolated showers.  
**Winds:** East at 10 kt. or less.

**POHNPEI**  
Mostly cloudy with isolated showers.  
**Winds:** Northeast at 15 kt.

**YAP AND ULITHI**  
Partly cloudy with isolated showers.  
**Winds:** East at 10-15 kt.

**KOSRAE**  
Partly cloudy.  
**Winds:** Northeast at 15 kt.

**CHUUK**  
Mostly cloudy with isolated showers.  
**Winds:** Northeast at 15 kt.

**MAJURO**  
Partly cloudy with isolated showers.  
**Winds:** Northeast at 15 kt.

CITY	FORECAST	HIGH	LOW
Auckland	Partly Cloudy	64F (18C)	52F (11C)
Beijing	Sunny	46F (8C)	26F (-3C)
Hong Kong	Cloudy	68F (20C)	57F (14C)
Honolulu	Cloudy	82F (28C)	74F (23C)
London, England	Partly Cloudy	39F (4C)	28F (-2C)
Los Angeles	Showers	60F (16C)	49F (9C)
Manila	Cloudy	89F (32C)	71F (22C)
Melbourne	Partly Cloudy	76F (24C)	58F (14C)
Miami	Cloudy	80F (27C)	58F (14C)
New York City	Sunny	38F (3C)	28F (-2C)
Osaka	Partly Cloudy	52F (11C)	36F (2C)
Paris	Snow	35F (2C)	18F (-8C)
Pusan	Partly Cloudy	56F (13C)	34F (1C)
Rome	Rain	50F (10C)	39F (4C)
Salem, Oregon	Showers	54F (12C)	40F (4C)
San Francisco	Showers	57F (14C)	46F (8C)
Seoul	Partly Cloudy	49F (9C)	19F (-7C)
Tokyo, Japan	Partly Cloudy	58F (14C)	49F (9C)
Washington, DC	Sunny	44F (7C)	28F (-2C)

# Speaker FitiaI joins PIDB board

By MARIAN A. MARAYA  
REPORTER

House Speaker Benigno R. FitiaI has accepted membership into the Pacific Islands Development Bank Board of Governors representing the CNMI Legislature.

FitiaI and acting Senate President Diego M. Songao confirmed with the PIDB President and CEO in a Feb. 24 letter that the speaker will be assuming the position left by former House Rep. Andrew S. Salas.

Salas, who was unsuccessful in his Senate bid in the midterm polls last November 2003, is now Deputy Secretary of Labor.

The PIDB is gearing for its annual Board of Governors meeting in March and is currently working to complete a new strategic plan.

Acting Gov. Diego T. Benavente, the incumbent PIDB Board of Governors chairman, recently attended the board of directors quarterly meeting in Guam where the organization kicked off the development of PIDB’s new strategic plan.

Benavente explained that the strategic plan, which will be presented in the Board of Governors meeting in Chuuk next month, is being updated to set the direction for the regional bank’s growth.

Last year, the CNMI played host to the annual Board of Governors meeting, where managers and shareholders held back-to-back meetings to discuss pending loan applications, among other concerns.

Of issue during last year’s assembly was the PIDB’s goal to secure additional equity contributions of \$1 million from member entities who have failed to pay their dues.

PIDB consists of seven members: CNMI, Guam, Kosrae, Chuuk, Palay, Yap and Pohnpei.

Benavente earlier underscored that the original intent of establishing PIDB was to be able to tap into world development banks that would assist member entities finance major infrastructure projects.

However, the board chairman admitted that the regional organization has yet to fulfill this goal, noting that PIDB has opted, in the meantime, to use the capital contributions from its members.

“But I believe that we have made a lot of progress since the creation. At one point, the Board of Governors met to decide to close the bank because of the inability of member entities to make the final contributions.

“But there was a decision not to close the bank. We got to the point where we’ve made enough

contributions through revenues generated by those funds covering for all the expenses incurred by the bank, and therefore, making profit,” Benavente stated in earlier reports.

Among others, it is the PIDB’s goal to secure assistance from world development banks such as JEXIM or the Export-Import Bank of Japan, as well as the Asian Development Bank.

Benavente had also stressed that the most important benefit of creating the PIDB is to continue strengthening regional economic cooperation.

# Five beach sites red-flagged

At least five favorite beach sites have been declared temporary no-swim zones due to excessive bacterial concentrations, the Division of Environmental Quality announced yesterday.

In all, the DEQ declared seven beach sites contaminated with enterococci, advising fishermen and beach goers to stay away from within 300 feet of these locations.

All 11 marine water samples taken from the

tourist-famous Managaha Island, however, contained no excessive concentrations of the bacteria.

DEQ laboratory manager Clarissa Bearden, in a report, said the contaminated beach sites include Grotto Cave, Bird Island, North Laulau, Obyan and Paupau.

The two other conta-minated beach sites are San Roque School and Garapan’s Drainage No. 1.

In its advisory, the DEQ said the no-swim advice takes affect

# Worker allowed to leave employer

By LIBERTY DONES  
REPORTER

The Department of Labor Hearing Office has allowed a nonresident worker to leave his employer and seek a new job following a complaint settlement.

In a Feb. 23 administrative order, hearing officer Linn Asper granted the complainant, identified only as Shamsul, relief to find new employment within 45 days, and awarded him over \$600 in unpaid wages and \$225 in unpaid food allowance.

Shamsul previously worked as live-in farmer for Amanda B. Manglona on Rota. Records showed that Shamsul worked for Manglona in 1999 and 2000.

From May to June 2000, Manglona reportedly encountered economic difficulties and failed to pay the worker \$600 for two months’ wages.

During the hearing, the worker claimed that he was also not being paid for his overtime while employed by the family. He said he was required to work 12 hours a day, six days a week.

He said he worked many of his overtime hours at night, packing betel nuts for commercial sale, cleaning the respondent’s house, and cooking for the family.

Manglona refuted his claims. She said that the betel nut work was never more than an hour a day and was not a daily assignment.

The department had calculated that Shamsul’s unpaid overtime pay was \$57.60 at \$1.44 an hour.

Asper said the department’s testimony and the respondent’s statements were “more credible than complainant’s testimony on the overtime issue.”

In his order, Asper said there is a gray area in the law regarding overtime for live-in employees as they often spend off-duty hours in the company of their employers.

He said that an employer is not required to pay a nonresident worker for such after-hours time “unless the employee performs work duties that benefit his or her employer.” If work is performed, the employee must be paid overtime, Asper said.

In Shamsul’s case, he said that after-hours labor was “casual and limited in duration.” As such he said, the department’s calculations should be accepted.

On food allowance, parties agreed that the complainant did not receive the expected allowance for three months at \$75 a month.

In his order, Asper said the respondent has already paid Shamsul \$657.60 following a determination issued in June 2003. As such, he will no longer receive liquidated damages, which would be equal to the award money.

Asper said that since Shamsul is not equally at fault in the case, he is entitled to a transfer relief.

gardenia islander  
+red



# Opinion

## Saipan Tribune

CNMI'S FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER

Volume XIV, Issue No. 57

Published daily at 2/F Century Insurance Building,  
Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan, CNMI  
Mailing Address: PMB 34, Box 10001, Saipan, MP, 96950

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## EDITORIAL

### Finding a way out for Haiti

**H**aiti is a time bomb with an ever-shortening fuse. With unemployment at perhaps 70 percent, the highest rate of HIV infection in the Caribbean and 8 million people crammed into an environmentally ruined space the size of Maryland, Haiti was ripe for the criminality and political instability that are now overtaking it.

If Haiti doesn't stabilize, nothing will stop a new exodus of desperate people risking an ocean journey to U.S. shores in little more than large, leaky rowboats. The still-small groups of anti-government thugs, armed by the drug cartels, could grow into real armies capable of creating a rogue state a few hundred miles off Florida's east coast.

The United States, France (once Haiti's colonizer), Canada, the Organization of American States and the group of Caribbean governments known as Caricom are struggling to broker a deal. Their current power-sharing proposal would leave Jean-Bertrand Aristide as president until elections in 2005 but curb his power with an opposition prime minister and cabinet.

Aristide has accepted the idea, knowing that he has no choice. His political opposition, however, under pressure from the armed militants to refuse, rejected the proposal Tuesday.

The opposition should have taken the deal because, as Dan Erickson of the Washington-based Inter-American Dialogue said, "Aristide is a problem with an expiration date, February 2006." Haiti will need that time to prepare for credible elections under the auspices of the OAS and United Nations.

The deal was clumsy and perhaps unworkable in the long run, but without it there is no immediate path forward. None of the participants in the talks is ready to unilaterally send in troops. They need some form of agreement to even ask the U.N. Security Council to send peacekeeping forces. The armed bands, both pro- and anti-Aristide, that terrorize the population are still small enough to be dealt with quickly by a well-trained force. But that situation won't last.

After its ultimately failed 1994 military intervention in Haiti, the United States has little appetite for a solo reprise. However, U.S. forces would have to be part of any peacekeeping effort.

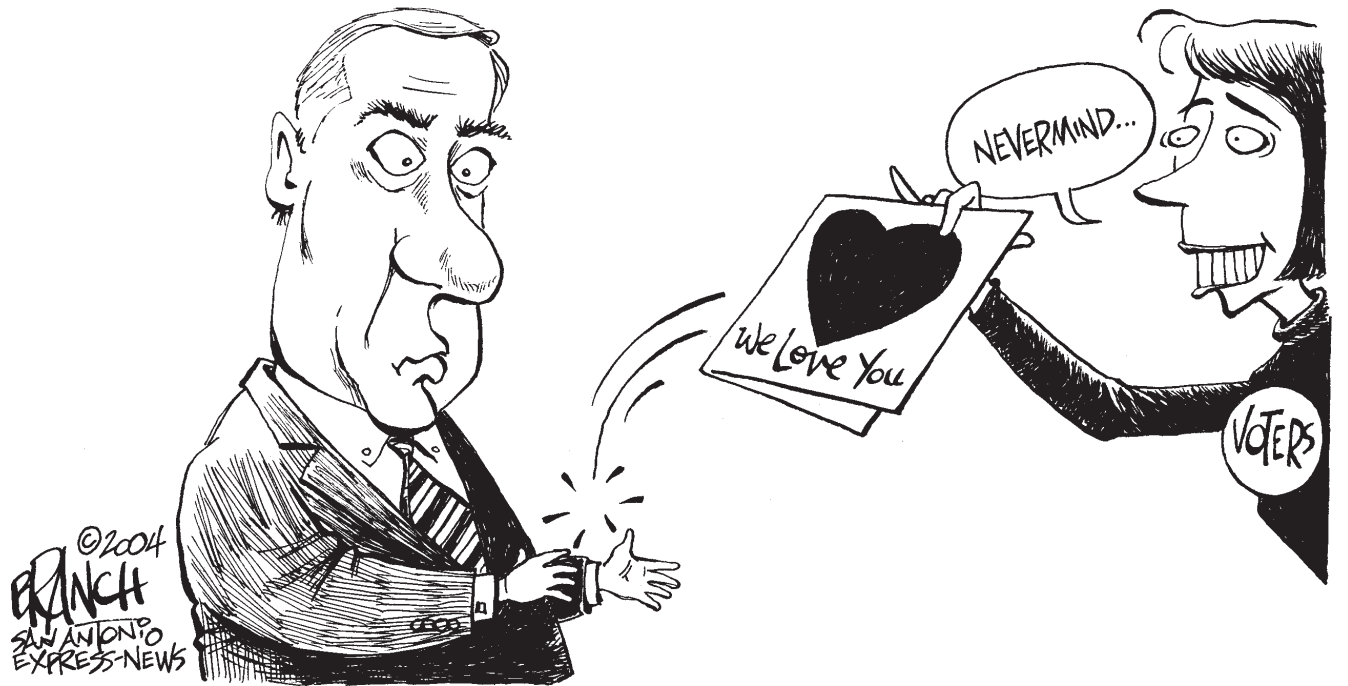
The United States has a long and troubled history in Haiti, beginning with the U.S. refusal, under pressure from its fearful slave states, to recognize the Haitian republic declared in 1804 by rebellious former slaves.

In the 20th century, a U.S. military and civil occupation was followed, after a brief democratic interlude, by the brutal U.S.-supported rule of Francois Duvalier and his son. Aristide himself was returned to power in 1994 under the auspices of Washington, only to run an increasingly corrupt government.

If Haiti is ever to offer its citizens an economic and civic future, only a sustained effort by its hemispheric neighbors will make space for more honest politics to grow.

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## THE ULTIMATE HOWARD DEAN ENDORSEMENT RETRACTION...



## A labor problem Made in the USA

**I**f this reads a bit awkwardly, it's because of a little experiment I've been conducting.

Overseas outsourcing. I'm having my column written by foreign workers.

I farm out my job to low-paid writers around the world, I get to keep most of my munificent wages, and I spend only about a half-hour on final inspection, compared to the dozen hours or more it takes to manufacture a column start to finish.

My nouns and pronouns are now made in Indonesia, verbs and adverbs in Mexico and adjectives in China. I tried subcontracting prepositions to Thailand, but someone thought I meant "propositions" and forwarded my inquiry to the Ministry of Sex Trade.

But the ideas are mine, generated right here, and that's why this column can proudly bear the words "Made in the U.S.A."

I spent an hour on the phone this weekend with "Larry" the computer troubleshooter. "Larry" is probably "Rajiv" in New Delhi. But he stuck to his "Larry" script, using my name in every sentence because Americans are supposed to like that. There were lots of sentences, because I had to ask him to repeat himself so I could understand him.

Larry is what intellectuals in India call a "techno-coolie." He answers the phone when you call some 800 numbers after your computer commits suicide or your credit card balks.

The Larrys of the world get coached in American slang, sports and pop culture; Larry could probably have told me what happened on the last episode of "Sex and the City." Some "techno-coolies" make up American bios for themselves, like Savitha in Bangalore, prepped to tell any inquisitive American that her name's Betty and she loves "Buffy the Vampire Slayer."

Shipping white-collar, info-tech jobs to foreign countries now has the White Housekeeping Seal of Approval. The Bush administration said last week, like Martha Stewart crooning over a pine-cone centerpiece, that this outsourcing is "a good thing." It may hurt in the short run, but we'll all love it eventually.

These jobs are not the lettuce-picking, burger-flipping jobs they say Americans won't take here at home—and by the way, it isn't the jobs Americans won't take, it's the lousy paychecks.

No, these are the bright, prosperous Jobs of Tomorrow that Americans were promised if we all put down our socket wrenches and picked up tech textbooks. The information economy lay glittering at the end of the information superhighway—which, as it turns out, looks more like a one-way road heading straight out of America.

Got laid off when Silicon Valley outsourced? Having a problem with your food stamps? You may find yourself talking to the foreign worker who got your job—because California has farmed out some telephone welfare services to India.

As for medical data—why bother making a big show of covering up my name on the doctor's office sign-in sheet, as required by the new patient privacy act, when some overseas outsourced medical tech could casually go flipping through my Pap smear results?

And the overseas outsourcing of consumer credit jobs means your Visa records and my Amex charges may be running across computer screens somewhere 10,000 miles away. Sen. Dianne Feinstein, D-Calif., just wrote to the heads of credit corporations like Bank of America and Citigroup, "gravely concerned that

By PATT MORRISON

Morrison is a Los Angeles Times columnist and frequent commentator on National Public Radio's "Morning Edition."



consumer data is being sent overseas without proper safeguards."

I'm supposed to feel safer because the Patriot Act can check up on what I check out of the library, but any evil-doing Tom, Dick or Ahmed with an outsourced credit-company source may lay his mitts on my Social Security number, phony up a passport and slip into the country while airport security is busy cuffing some granny who left her crochet hook in her purse?

And what recourse would I have? Filing suit? I can't even get the local valet parking company to pay for breaking my car-door handle. How can I possibly recover an identity stolen in Uttar Pradesh?

This is "a sweet spot" time for corporate profits—so said a big-bucks Philly investor—"no hiring, no discretionary capital spending, no inventory building."

"No hiring" should mean more overtime for workers who still have jobs. It doesn't. Corporations are finagling to stretch the definition of who's entitled to overtime and who's not. Some California companies tried to dodge overtime pay by promoting almost every worker to "manager"—even though the only thing some "managers" managed was a broom.

Last month, American workers—the ones President Bush referred to not long ago as the most productive in the world—once again got more stick and less carrot.

New federal standards trim the ranks of overtime-eligible employees. Among them may be people who have "training in the armed forces." Welcome back, soldier, thanks for the service—and oh, by the way, you won't be getting overtime any more.

There's one job no one's talked about outsourcing: the presidency. Surely we can get more work for less money.

Hire Tony Blair for the showy stuff that Bush dislikes—the ringing speeches, the cut-and-thrust debates. The Guardian newspaper estimated that Blair costs his country about \$38 an hour. Big savings there.

For the sneaky political work, there's Russian President and KGB alum Vladimir Putin. His financial declaration, filed a couple of weeks ago, shows he's been earning less than \$100,000 a year. A bargain.

And I'll bet Spanish Prime Minister Jose Maria Aznar would speak better Spanish for less.

So what work is left in America for an American president to do? In the State of the Union speech, Bush dwelt on the horrors of steroids, and demanded that sports officials "take the lead, to send the right signal, to get tough and to get rid of steroids now."

That's it—he can take charge of the one job that will always stay in America, that's too important to privatize or outsource: baseball commissioner.



## Letter to the Editor

Saipan Tribune welcomes contributions. All letters intended for publication must include the writer's name, address and, if possible, fax or telephone number. Letters are edited for space, clarity and fairness.

# Suggestion for the Board of Regents

At this juncture, it may be prudent for the State Board of Regents to delay pushing through with the Pacific Gateway program until the Western Association of Schools and Colleges make its determination on the two financial reports that were rejected in June 2003 and January 2004, as well as the required Substantive Change Report that pertains to the move to the La Fiesta Mall. Should any of these reports not be accepted and approved by WASC subsequent to when they are due on April 1, 2004, then the Board of Regents will be compelled to place the Pacific Gateway program into abeyance until the institution is financially stable and the report regarding the move to La Fiesta is accepted and approved by Dr. Barbara Benoit and the accreditation team officials of WASC.

If the reports that are submitted on April 1, 2004 regarding the fiscal issues surrounding NMC, as well as the Substantive Change Report, and approved shortly thereafter, then there would be no reason for the Board of Regents to not follow through with their aspiration to implement Pacific Gateway. However, it must be underscored that the reports involving the solvency and financial stability of NMC, as well as the institutional planning for Pacific Gateway, will go hand in hand. Should the financial reports not be accepted, then the likelihood of the Pacific Gateway program getting the green light to move forward does not look promising.

The trite cliché "Hind site is twenty-twenty" might be appropriate in discussing the particulars of the Pacific Gateway project.

Had the administrative leadership of NMC implemented back in August 2002 the economic austerity plan that the Board of Regents recently placed into effect subsequent to the resignation of Kenneth Wright, then the college would have more than likely had an opportunity to eradicate the institutional deficit which has plagued the institution since 2001. Moreover, had the administrative leadership began formulating the Substantive Change Report while the college was moving toward financial stability and prior to making the physical move to the La Fiesta Mall, then the matter of trying to implement the program before the report was submitted and approved by WASC would not be a critical issue.

Since the warning was issued to NMC from WASC regarding the April 1 deadline for the formulation of approved reports on the financial issues and Substantive Change, then the over-arching priority might be to focus and get these reports produced in acceptable order. Should the reports not be accepted and approved by WASC, then the Board of Regents may not have any other alternative than to place the Pacific Gateway program on the shelf until the college can become fiscally stable and can provide the financial wherewithal to support and implement a program.

Careful and prudent planning is now imperative and the key to bringing the college out of the financial quagmire it is presently in and in implementing an ambitious program like Pacific Gateway. Unfortunately, the austerity measures established by the Board of Regents while the college is trying to become financially stable and operating normally will make it difficult for faculty, staff, as well as students, simply because there will no doubt be some negative ramifications. And sometimes when you are in a negative situation, the progress that is made down the line will be that much more satisfying. Hopefully, the fiscal dilemma and confidence levels of the college and island community will be restored in the very near future. In the interim, it is always good to think about meaningful quotes during tough times. The one that I always think about came from Dr. Frederick Douglass, a Black scholar during the Civil War. He said, "If there is no struggle, there will be no progress."

Dr. Jesus Camacho  
Delano, California

## Blue, Blue, Blue

Unless the financial world comes unglued, Saipan's Asian tourism market is looking good. The dollar is weak and will stay that way, putting more purchasing power in the pockets of tourists. Japan clocked in a very nice 3.6 percent increase in gross domestic product last quarter, along with an increase in industrial output of 5.9 percent.

Meanwhile, South Korea is growing by about 2.5 percent a year—not blockbuster growth, but I expect it to pick up, perhaps even double, in the foreseeable future. Taiwan is logging GDP growth of over 4 percent.

And in case you were wondering, China's growth is clocking in at 9.9 percent, a figure that is utterly amazing, even if it's not really sustainable in perpetuity. In fact, China might be in for an ugly jolt when the U.S. dollar's problems hit the fan, but that's a story for a different day.

But let's get something straight: A healthy market for tourism doesn't necessarily mean that the Commonwealth will see substantially more tourists, just as having a lot of fish in the sea doesn't mean that a fisherman will enjoy a better catch. Maybe he'll prefer to stay ashore, just play darts and drink beer instead. Fish in the sea don't mean fish in the boat.

True, the world is all a jitter with nail-biting worries over fuel prices, but that's largely a dollar-related phenomenon and I doubt it's a stake in the heart of most of the world's airlines. Well, not yet, anyway. And even if there's an oil crisis brewing, air fares to Saipan from Japan and Korea are so doggone cheap to begin with that they'd have to really spike to make a dent in the action.

And the potential action is awesome. I wrote a computer model of the Commonwealth tourism industry back in 1997 and 1998, which addressed the demand and supply side of the gig, and my conclusion was (and still is) that the CNMI could eventually host one million visitors a year. There were enough hotels in the planning

## Passion

Mel Gibson's produced, directed, and co-written film, *The Passion of the Christ*, has elicited a lot of controversy in the past few weeks; primarily from the Anti-Defamation League's national director, Abraham Foxman. One search of articles in newspapers mentioned *The Passion* showed 22 percent of the articles cited the ADL's critique that the film is anti-Semitic—which Gibson has continuously denied. The ADL was even mentioned more times than the film's star, James Caviezel (*The Count of Monte Cristo*), who plays Jesus.

Not all Jews have been so critical of the film. Orthodox rabbi, Daniel Lapin, in a February 12, 2004 article of *Toward Tradition* made three predictions: First, that *The Passion* will "make a great deal of money" for Gibson; second, the movie "will become famous as the most serious and substantive Biblical movie ever made;" and third, that "the faith of millions of Christians will become more fervent as *The Passion* uplifts and inspires them."

What might have become an obscure, subtitled film that would only appeal to a niche market is now poised to become one of the year's biggest movies. This is a film that Gibson is passionate about. Even though he joked that *The Passion* might be his "career-killer," the enormity of Gibson's challenge to produce a Christian film is realized when one considers that most of the television and cable networks, and Hollywood studios such as Universal, Fox, MGM, Paramount, Disney, Viacom, and Comcast are headed or controlled by individuals of Jewish ancestry who may be offended by the film.

Gibson was rejected by 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox, which usually distributes his movies, and all the other major studios also rejected the project, so he was forced to risk \$25 million of his own money to see it come to the silver screen. It's obvious that Mel Gibson's motivation is not to earn a lot of money from the film or to gain more popularity. He has been publicly crucified by the media for wanting to make a movie that seems like more of a catharsis for Gibson to share an authentic portrayal of the last twelve hours in the life of Christ.

He literally has risked his career to produce a deeply personal film that only time and the hearts and minds of the public will determine if it connects with its audience. Rabbi Lapin believes that *The Passion* "will propel vast numbers of unreligious Americans to embrace Christianity. The movie will one day be seen as a harbinger of America's third great religious reawakening."

If you are a businessperson, what is the message in all of this? We believe it is rare today for someone to stand up for his or her moral convictions. Do you have something that you feel strongly

By ED STEPHENS

Ed Stephens, Jr. is an economist and columnist for the Saipan Tribune. "Ed4Saipan@yahoo.com"



stages, enough airline service potentially available, and certainly enough tourism demand in Asia to make solid progress towards that million visitor benchmark. But I guess that potential didn't have enough pizzazz to generate community resolve to honestly pursue it, so it rusted to death on the launching pad.

But there were some worthy efforts made before the action fell apart. Does anybody remember the "Blue, Blue, Blue" advertising campaign of 1998 or so? There are a lot of facets to judging an advertising campaign, but on the creative side of things I thought the ads were awesome. They were aimed at the target market in Japan. Talk about a job well done...but the whole thing, as usual, wound up in a smouldering heap of political controversy and contention, and I think the CNMI's new campaign became "Broke, Broke, Broke."

I remember taking a Japanese family on a helicopter flight around the island, and one of the kids, enthralled by the sound of his own voice over the copter's intercom, said "Blue, Blue, Blue" for the duration of the entire flight. He's probably still saying it, for all I know...so if you encounter some lunatic in the Tokyo subway chanting it, please tell him that Captain Ed sends his regards...

Meanwhile, Asia will continue to Grow, Grow, Grow, and those tourists will have more green to spend on some blue.

By RIK and JANEL VILLEGAS

Rik is a business instructor at NMC and Janel is the owner of Positively Outrageous Results. They have consulted with over 400 businesses in 40 different industries. For better business results go to BizResults.biz to read previous articles.



about, yet fear what others will think or that you might fail? If you become passionate about something, you will be able to overcome incredible obstacles that might stand in your way. We would like to share one other example of a movie actor that demonstrates how being passionate in pursuit of a dream can overcome great challenges.

In 1974 a B-rated actor, down to his last \$106, submitted his screenplay to a studio that offered him \$20,000 for it, but they wanted Ryan O'Neal or Burt Reynolds to play the lead character. The actor desperately needed the money, but he wanted to play the lead himself and offered to act for free.

The studio offered him \$80,000 on the condition that he would not play the lead, and he turned them down again. Robert Redford was interested in the role, and the studio upped their offer to \$200,000, but the actor stood strong. They came back with another offer of \$330,000 for the screenplay, but he told them that he would rather not see the movie made if he could not play the lead, and he did not want to go through life wondering "what if?"

The studios finally agreed to let him play the lead, but only paid him the original \$20,000 for the script plus \$340 per week minimum actor's scale. After all his expenses, he netted about \$6,000 for the film project instead of the \$330,000 he could have pocketed.

Was it worth it? Well, if you ask the actor, Sylvester Stallone, if it was worth holding out to play the lead in the movie *Rocky*, we are sure he would agree that it was. In 1976 the movie won three Oscars and the five *Rocky* films have grossed more than \$1 billion. It launched Stallone's career and made him an international star.

Do you have something you are passionate about, and determined to make come true? Whether you are already successful like Gibson or starting out like Stallone, your passion will determine how successful you will become in whatever worthwhile project you want to achieve. Live with passion and make your dreams become a reality.



# Realignment of hospital services eyed

By MARIAN A. MARAYA  
REPORTER

The chairman of the House Committee on Health and Welfare is prepared to make a presentation to justify his legislative proposal that would divert people's primary and secondary healthcare needs to private clinics instead of the Commonwealth Health Center.

Rep. Crispin Ogo has tapped Dr. Larry Hocog to make the presentation set for possibly March 9 or 10 at the House Chamber.

House Bill 14-100, which the author introduced last Feb. 13, essentially seeks to diminish heavy patient traffic at the Commonwealth's lone public hospital.

The proposed "Public Health Care Realignment Act of 2004" is aimed at reducing the cost of government services by realigning the function of the Department of Public Health to administer government-owned healthcare facilities.

"The bill is to make sure that primary care goes to the private clinics so that CHC will just entertain serious injuries," Ogo explained.

In defining serious injuries, the legislator mentioned surgery and other complex medical procedures as an example.

Patients seeking treatment for "cuts, headaches, and other minor injuries" would directly go to private clinics instead of the hospital, Ogo proposes.



Ogo

"This will minimize the number of patients [going] to CHC. At the same time we will have quicker turnaround with our patients at CHC. So the bill I introduced just gives private clinics in Saipan the opportunity to entertain these clients and patients. If you minimize the number of doctors [at CHC], because of channeling to private clinics, we're saving millions of dollars for personnel," said the author.

Ogo said that he has asked

support from Senate Health, Education and Welfare Chairman Henry San Nicolas on HB 14-100.

The bill seeks to amend 1 CMC § 2603 to reflect a subsection (f) that reads "to administer all government-owned health care facilities provided that the department shall not administer facilities within a senatorial district for primary and secondary health care that are offered by, and available at, private health care providers and clinics operating within the senatorial district that have adequate liability insurance."

The House Committee on Health and Welfare is planning to hold public hearings to solicit comment on HB 14-100.

## NO

From Page 1

do or to take over what they're doing. We will work together and make recommendations," Quitugua told reporters yesterday.

The committee chairman said he met with members of the Board of Regents on Monday, where he was apprised of the college's poor financial standing.

He quoted BOR officials as stressing the need to reassess NMC's financial situation. "They are saying that, based on their estimates, they will be in

the red by the end of this fiscal year by about \$240,000."

Quitugua was also told that the amount excludes liabilities that NMC expects to incur from its La Fiesta acquisition.

BOR chairperson Kimberly King-Hinds confirmed earlier that, contrary to the leadership's expectations, the La Fiesta undertaking is proving to be a millstone on the college's neck.

She said the college was expecting that it would operate La Fiesta at no cost, considering the revenue it would be getting from existing tenants. The

college entered into a \$7.5-million purchase of the property on Aug. 18, 2003.

Based on first-hand information he gathered from BOR officials, Quitugua assessed that "the college is in a deep hole in terms of their financial situation."

"Also, [they are concerned about] the Pell grants that they have not received from the federal government. Based on [what BOR said], they messed up the auditing reports and now the federal government has put them on a reimbursement basis. They

have to provide necessary information in the reporting in order for them to get the reimbursement. And according to them, they have hired a consultant from California to help them unlock the holdup in the Pell grants," Quitugua explained.

The congressman stressed that his committee is willing to work with NMC to help the institution recover from these financial difficulties.

The legislator declined to comment on the resignation of NMC President Kenneth Wright.

"I don't want to comment on that. The only thing that I asked the members of the BOR on Monday is that, when they make their decisions, on what do they base their decisions? They said they based their decisions on the information that the president provided them. And they said they were not actually getting the full information that they needed from the president to make a better decision."

## AUTOMATIC

From Page 1

to the immigration rules also seeks to assess a \$100-fee for criminal background check.

"Destinations are doing everything possible to offer the most affordable packages available. In the low-budget tourist market in which we compete, the fees associated with this VEP process are enough to push us out of consideration for many travelers," the SCC president said.

He explained that the CNMI would have sufficient revenues to support the processing of VEPs if it fixes the efficiency rate in the collection of taxes and other existing government fees.

Sablan also cited that three immigration staff recently got paid some \$100,000 in overtime in just a quarter-year, since the Immigration Division is currently understaffed. He requested the government to hire additional full-time employees instead.

## NGA

From Page 1

prepare to testify in Washington D.C. in support of the creation of a delegate in the U.S. House of Representatives for the people of the Northern Marianas.

"Perhaps, the most important key to success in Washington is persistence," Babauta said. "As Resident Representative, I was able to have delegate legislation approved by the House Resources Committee in 1996; but it never reached the floor of the House for a vote.

"Our present Representative, Pete A. Tenorio, has taken up the baton, made friendships, and lobbied hard for our delegate. This week's hearing is a result.

The CNMI governor conceded that there is certainly no guarantee that the hearing will result in legislation or that legislation, if introduced, will be approved by Congress and signed by the President.

"But we will keep raising the issue until we achieve our goal of representation in Congress. After all, the people of the Northern Marianas are U.S. citizens. We deserve a voice in our own national government," said Babauta.

The hearing, called by Resources Committee Chairman Richard Pombo, was scheduled for 10am, Feb. 25, in Washington D.C.

Pombo had led a delegation of members of Congress to the Marianas region in January this year.

## RETENTION

From Page 1

this development yesterday in connection with the Army Corps' Saipan Lagoon Aquatic Restoration project.

Pangelinan said the Army Corps has been eyeing the biofilter project in lieu of the ponding basin proposal at a former quarry site in Garapan.

The federal agency and its environmental consultants have determined that the proposed site for the ponding basin is not suitable for the project, Pangelinan said. The project aimed to divert stormwater runoff from higher grounds to the ponding basin, he added.

Once the design for the biofilter project is completed, Pangelinan said CNMI agencies would need to approve of it. He said the Army Corps is looking at three possible sites to carry out the project: Quartermaster,

Gualo Rai and the Garapan Fishing Base.

The Army Corps began surveying several areas from Quartermaster to Garapan in 2002 to determine the concentration of runoff flowing into the lagoon. As part of the process, Army Corps representatives entered several private lands in between Middle Road and Beach Road.

In one of the surveys, the Army Corps earlier discovered a prehistoric site dating back to the Latte Period from 500AD to 1500AD in the China House area.

The China House site, known as the "Liyang Site" of the Latte Period, reportedly has historic tombstones.

Latte stones are prehistoric stone remnants of the period. During the Latte Period, Chamorros built houses above the ground on parallel rows of stone supports, according to historical accounts.

VEP application. These favored nations include Japan, South Korea, Great Britain, Spain and France, among others.

Without this consideration, the immigration process would be discouraging to tourists and businessmen who are not citizens of U.S.-favored nations.

In a separate interview, Sablan particularly mentioned the China market, especially since the CNMI is seeking Approved Destination Status from the Chinese government. "If you want an ADS status in China, we have to be friendly to their nationals."

He also said most Chinese tourists who have visited the islands came via flights by quasi-government airline companies. He said allowing visitors with U.S.- and favored-nation visas shouldn't have security repercussions, especially now that the AGO is coordinating with the U.S. State Department for capability to conduct background checks.



# Social workers, therapists set annual training

Guam’s two professional organizations comprised of social workers and therapists have joined forces to present their annual conference. The regional training event is slated for March 24-26 at the Hilton Guam Resort and Spa.

The conference, which would bring together social workers, therapists and other human service professionals and para-professionals, is entitled “Creating a Professional Commodity: Marketing Our Values to the Community.”

Twenty-three sessions will be presented by an array of professionals in the field and from the community.

The presentations incorporate best practice models, social issues and skill building. The workshops will increase participants’ understanding of how to enhance the quality of human services through utilizing research and best practice models, how to advance social work and human service values through their programs, and the importance of marketing these programs and services to the community-at-large.

Registration for the three-day conference is now open and will close on March 19. Discounts are available for early registration and for members and students.

The National Association of Social Workers Guam Chapter and the Association of Individual, Marriage and Family Therapists on Guam are co-sponsors of the conference. Both NASW and AIMFT are non-profit associations.

For more information, contact Renata Bordallo at 477-7671 (email:renatab@ite.net), Ann Hardin at 477-3383, or Trinie Pangelinan at 735-2877.

## Group to hold tax seminar

The Marianas Institute of Filipino CPAs and Accountants (Mificpa) will conduct a tax seminar on 2003 Individual and Corporate tax returns preparation and tax updates. The venue shall be at the CNMI Multi-Purpose Center, Susupe, Saipan on Feb. 29, 2004. Registration starts at 8am at the center’s premises on Sunday and the seminar will start at 9am up to 12pm.

Jennie Chiu and Edgar T. Aguilar, Senior Manager and Manager, respectively, from Tax Services of Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu will be the resource persons.

Participants will have the chance to raise questions on tax matters to maximize money saving features in filing the 2003 individual and corporate tax returns.

Registration fee will be \$10 for Mificpa members and \$15 for non-members. Free seminar materials will be provided to the participants and light snacks shall be served.

Proceeds from the workshop will help defray Mificpa’s continuing projects that benefit its members and the community in general.

Seats are limited so for advance reservation and for more information, contact any of the Mificpa officers: Febe Perez at 322-8602 or Ia Vilar at 322-4501.

### 1040 Form distribution set

The Division of Revenue and Taxation wishes to inform all CNMI residents that the distribution of the 2003 1040 forms and instruction will begin on March 1, from 8am to 4pm, at the Office of the Division of Revenue and Taxation located at the DanDan Commercial Center.

All residents are asked to pick up the forms during regular business hours beginning March 1. Please be reminded that the deadline for filing 2003 1040 is Thursday, April 15, 2004 at 12am.(midnight).

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guangdong



# Int’l student confab open to applicants

The 56<sup>th</sup> Japan-America Student Conference will be held this year from July 21 to Aug. 20, 2004, with the theme “Re-evaluating the Japan-America Relationship: Civic Commitment to Global Issues.”

This year, the 56<sup>th</sup> JASC will begin when 40 American delegates arrive in Hawaii for the American orientation on July 21. The Japanese delegation will arrive on July 25. After a two-day joint-orientation, both delegations will begin their pursuit of the 56<sup>th</sup> JASC objectives and the 2004 theme.

The 56<sup>th</sup> JASC goals include addressing contemporary issues that affect the United States and Japan; exploring the basis for civic commitment and responsibility; cultivating mutual understanding; seeking viable means of reform to pertinent issues; forming meaningful friendships; creating cultural appreciation and sensitivity; promoting lifelong learning; and fostering student leadership.

American delegates will be selected from all fields of study and will range from 1<sup>st</sup> year college students to Ph.D. candidates. Delegates need not be Asian studies majors or studying Japanese language because English is the primary language of the conference.

While U.S. citizenship or permanent resident status is preferred, the only eligibility requirement is full-time student standing. Each applicant will be asked to submit short answer essays, an autobiographical essay, a writing sample, a current transcript and letters of recommendation. Upon selection, delegates will prepare a roundtable-related presentation prior to the conference.

For the 56<sup>th</sup> JASC, the participation fee is \$2,000, which covers all food, lodging and group travel for the duration of the conference. Travel between each conference location is included in this fee. Roundtrip domestic transportation to the American Orientation site, Honolulu, and from the final destination, Princeton, NJ, is the responsibility of the individual delegate.

Organizers pointed out, though, that each year a considerable number of delegates—80 percent of American delegates for the 55<sup>th</sup> JASC— receive full or partial financial support from their universities or other organizations.

Upon selection, JASC Inc. and the American Executive Committee can provide advice for locating and obtaining scholarships and financial aid.

Applications for the 56<sup>th</sup> JASC must be postmarked by March 1, 2004. Applications may be printed from the website at [www.jasc.org/](http://www.jasc.org/).

This year also marks the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of JASC. In commemoration of this special year, an alumni reunion will take

place the weekend of July 29-August 2 in Honolulu, Hawaii.

During the alumni reunion, the year’s delegation will exchange views with a wide variety of accomplished alumni from both the U.S. and Japan.

The conference will then begin its schedule of traveling to four American cities over the course of four weeks during which the students will engage in academic roundtable discussions, cultural and social events, lectures and panel presentations, fieldtrips and 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations with alumni from across the U.S. and Japan.

The tour schedule is:

July 21-Aug. 1	East-West Center, Honolulu, Hawaii
July 21-24	American Orientation
July 29-Aug. 2	Alumni Reunion
Aug. 2-4	Mills College, San Francisco, Calif & Homestay
Aug. 5-11	George Washington University, Washington, D.C.
Aug. 12-20	Princeton University, Princeton, NJ

JASC said these experiences will provide a foundation for mutual understanding and social awareness, cultural sensitivity, and an academic challenge of ideas.

“More importantly, the bonds that will form as a result of the 80 students living and working together will offer the basis for life-long friendships that will further strengthen the ties between Japan and the United States,” the organizers said in a statement.

Delegates will serve on one of the eight Roundtables, each of which is related to the 56<sup>th</sup> JASC theme. As members of a roundtable, delegates will participate in frequent table meetings that last from one to three hours. During these table sessions, delegates will engage in active discussions, field trips, lectures, and panel presentations that focus on their respective Table Topics.

The specific approach taken to each roundtable will be decided by the delegates upon arrival to the conference.

In order to establish a foundation of knowledge, delegates will research an issue related to their Table Topics prior to the conference and compose a written paper to be shared with members of their respective roundtables.

Additionally, delegates will frequently collaborate with other roundtables to share and generate new ideas and perspective. The materials discussed in the roundtable and joint roundtable sessions will then serve as the foundation for the Forum, which will conclude the 56<sup>th</sup> JASC experience.

nikko

# Army recruiters to administer enlistment test

Army recruiters from the U.S. Army Recruiting Detachment on Guam are currently on Saipan to visit the high schools and to test young men and women for service in the U.S. Army and Army Reserve.

They will be available to answer any question people may have about joining the U.S. Army, including incentives like money for college, skill training, guaranteed pay and entitlements,

travel, adventure, medical and dental care, 20-year retirement and much more.

All interested are encouraged to take the test. Additional Army Reserve opening are available to fill vacancies in an additional Army Reserve unit, which is opening on Saipan. Jobs for both males and females are opening at the new Saipan unit.

The test will be administered

at the U.S. Army Reserve Center in Puerto Rico. The test will be given today, Feb. 27, at 4:30pm, and tomorrow, Feb. 28, at 12:30pm.

Sgt. First Class Albert Abadam, Sgt. First Class Christopher Cooper, and Sgt. Felimarie Benavente can be contacted during the test days at the Hyatt Regency Saipan at 234-1234.

Young men and women between the ages of 17-34, all

high school seniors and high school graduates are encouraged to contact SFC Abadam or Sgt. Benavente to see if they can qualify for Army service.

The recruiters can also be contacted at the U.S. Army Recruiting Detachment on Guam at telephone numbers 671-477-7666 or 671-477-7330; or you can call the U.S. Army Reserve Center at 322-6680 to reserve a test seat.

# Verizon offers new lower long distance rates

Have you tried a Verizon Long Distance Calling Card lately?

In it's continuing efforts to offer world-class communication services to its customers Verizon is pleased to announce new lower long

distance rates to the destinations you call the most.

Beginning in March long distance callers will notice substantially reduced rates calling from landline and cellular units when using either of Verizon's No Connect and Connect pre-paid calling cards.

Verizon Marketing Manager

Russ Quinn said: “Verizon has a long, reliable history of delivering clear, fast quality long distance connections to our customers.

“We’re pleased to announce that because of our continued capacity negotiations and market demands we are able to offer these new lower rates for long distance calling.”

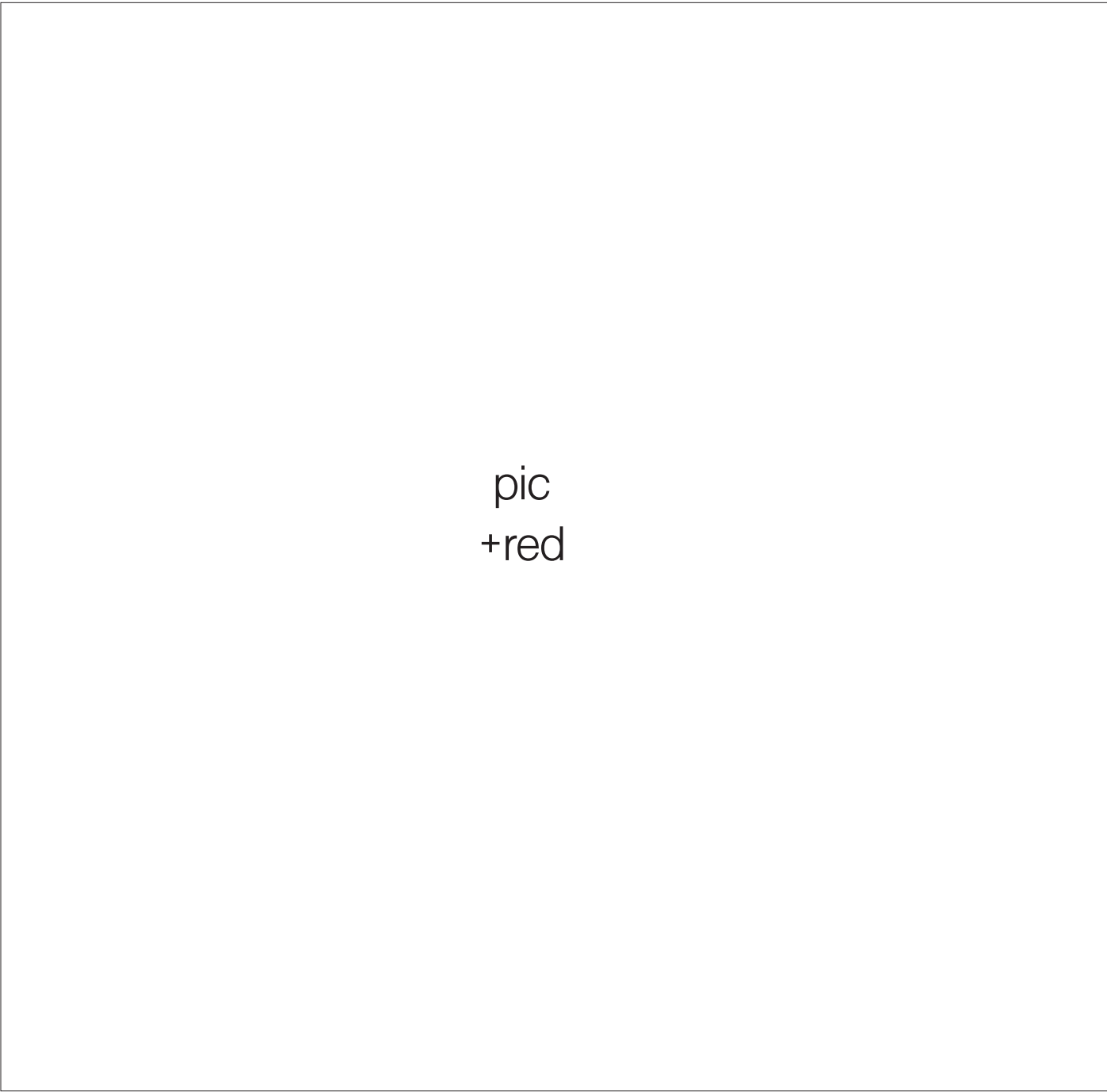
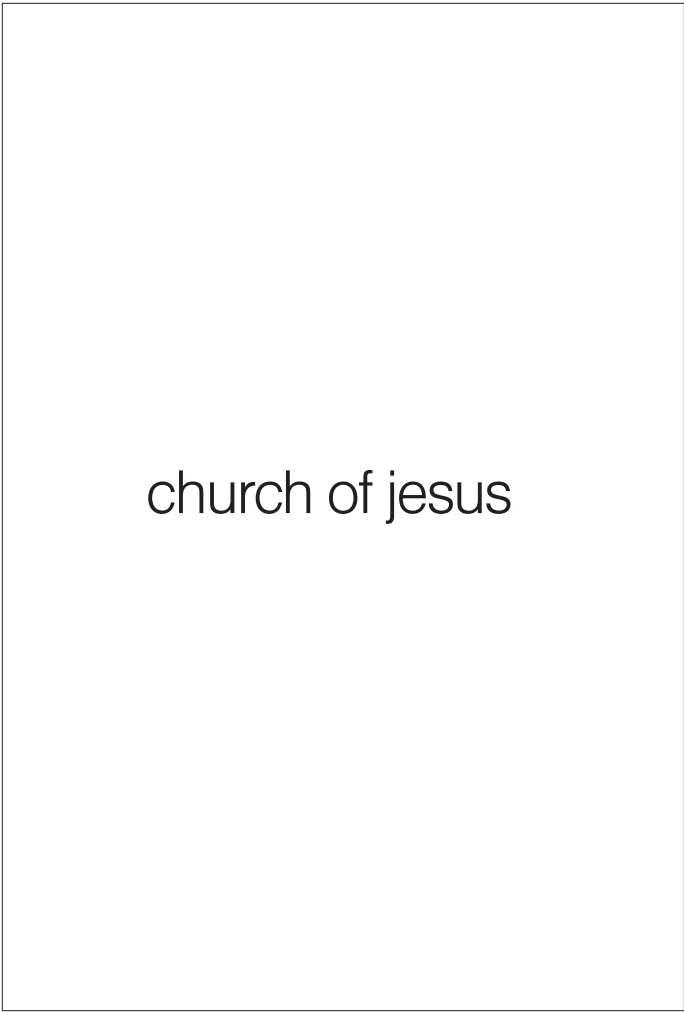
Just a few of the reduced rate destinations include the Philippines, U.S.A, Thailand, Korea, Japan, and Hong Kong.

For information on where to purchase a Verizon Pre-Paid Long Distance Calling Card please call the Verizon Customer Service number: 234-7143.

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Pacific

American Samoa plans National Guard unit

**PAGO PAGO, American Samoa,** (Samoa News)—Governor Togiola Tulafono met with Hawaii National Guard officials in Honolulu this week to discuss his plans of establishing a similar unit in American Samoa.

The Governor, accompanied by First Lady Maryann Tulafono, left the Territory on Monday night for meetings in Honolulu before heading to

Washington D.C. yesterday afternoon for more conferences in the nation’s capital.

Responding to Samoa News inquiries, Togiola said from Honolulu upon arrival there, that he was stopping in Hawaii “to meet with the Adjutant General of the Hawaii National Guard to discuss our plans for establishing a National Guard unit in American Samoa.”

“I wanted to touch base with him since he is in a good position to advise on this issue and how we can work together,” the Governor explained. “General Robert Lee is a great friend of American Samoa and many of the soldiers in our local Army Reserve, especially retired Lt. Colonel Mapu Jamias knows him.”

“This is a meeting which is a prelude to my meeting in D.C.

with General Blum who is the Head of the Army National Guard,” the Governor said.

While in Honolulu, the Governor said he was also “attending a couple of meetings regarding preparations for the Manu’a Centennial, especially with personnel that are working on possible military participation in this anniversary.”

The Governor provided no

additional details about this issue, but he is expected to release that information as soon as participation of the military in the centennial is confirmed.

The Manu’a Centennial celebration, marking the 100 years when the Manu’a Island group became part of American Samoa, is set for July 16 and a program is being worked out by a centennial committee estab-

lished last year by the Governor and chaired by Lt. Governor Ipulasi Aitofele Sunia.

The Manu’a Centennial will be held in conjunction with the official 2004 Flag Day celebration, which is usually held on April 17.

This year, the annual Flag Day event in April will be marked by a brief flag raising ceremony at the Executive Office Building (EOB) in Utulei.



ROYAL FUNERAL

Tongan men dressed in black and traditional woven mats carry a ceremonial bier known as a catafalque bearing the coffin of the South Pacific nation’s king’s second son, Maatu Fatafehi Alaivahamama’o Tuku’aho in Nuku’alofa, Tonga, Wednesday, Feb. 25, 2004. An estimated 6,000 people attended the funeral of the Tongan prince at Mala’ekula in Nukualofa. Ma’atu died last week at the age of 48.

Tug-of-war over party leadership in PNG

**PORT MORESBY, Papua New Guinea** (PNG Post-Courier/PIR)—Papua New Guinea Foreign Affairs Minister Rabbie Namaliu yesterday declared himself parliamentary leader of the country’s oldest political party, the Pangu Pati.

Sir Rabbie, the member of parliament for Kokopo, was backed by Kavieng Member of Parliament Martin Aini and Telefomin MP Atimeng Buhupe, who were announced as deputy leaders representing the Islands and Mamose regions respectively.

But Gulf Governor Chris Haiveta, backed by Pangu Pati Secretary-General Moses Taian, yesterday said that both

Sir Rabbie and Mr. Aini had been expelled from the party on Monday.

Pangu Pati’s national president, Pate Wamp, and South Fly Member of Parliament Conrad Haoda were at that meeting.

“They are not members of the party. They have formed a new political group of former members of the party,” Mr. Haiveta said. “It is sad that it has happened this way but the truth is they have formed a new group.”

Sir Rabbie announced his appointment yesterday, saying it was regrettable the Pangu leadership crisis could

not be resolved in a more harmonious way.

“But my colleagues and I were left with no choice but to address the issue of leadership, and the future of the Pangu Pati, when the former leader consistently refused to do so,” Sir Rabbie said. “We are confident that both the legality and rationale of our actions, and our status, will be confirmed. We had received legal advice that supports our position and our actions.”

He said attempts made to get Mr Haiveta to reach an amicable solution failed because the Governor refused or declined to attend.

DIAL RENT



# Guam party chairman resigns amid scandal



## Fierce cyclone still hunkered over Vanuatu

**HONOLULU** (Pacific Islands Report)—Vanuatu remained pinned by Cyclone Ivy Wednesday as winds of more than 100 miles per hour and waves reaching 32 feet hammered the island nation.

There was no immediate word of damage or injury.

Satellite photographs last night showed the eye of the storm centered over the nation’s capital of Port Vila on the island of Efete as Ivy continued its slow southward course.

The Fiji Meteorological Service last night estimated sustained winds at 90 knots (103 mph), increasing to 95 knots (109 mph) today. The storm was moving south by southeast at 4 knots.

The cyclone was expected to track southward to the east of New Caledonia as winds continue to build with gusts as high as 145 knots (160 mph) by tomorrow

## Nauru president facing ouster vote

**MELBOURNE, Australia** (Radio Australia)—Nauru’s parliament is scheduled to meet shortly amid another political crisis.

A Parliamentary vote of no confidence in the President, Rene Harris, has tied at 8 to 8.

But the 18th Member of Parliament, Remy Namaduk, was not present.

However, Namaduk is expected to be back in Nauru when Parliament resumes. The latest crisis in Nauru was precipitated by the resignation of the Justice Minister, Godfrey Toma.

President Harris was returned to the Presidency just six months ago after removing Ludwig Scotty in a no confidence vote.

## PNG gives \$171K to Solomons for students

**HONIARA, Solomon Islands** (SIBC)—The Solomon Islands High Commissioner to Papua New Guinea Philip Kapini today received \$1.26 million (US\$171,000) from Papua New Guinea, part of a \$6.3 million (US\$856,000) grant from Papua New Guinea.

The money received today is to go towards education of Solomon Islands students in Papua New Guinea institutions.

The remaining \$5.04 million is to go towards the running of Solomon Islands High Commission Office in Port Moresby.

On receiving the money, High Commissioner Mr Kapini said the assistance is very generous, especially at this time when both countries are facing difficult economic circumstances.

## Fiji mercenaries to sue British firm for back wages

**WELLINGTON, New Zealand** (RNZI/PIR) - A Fiji lawyer representing

a group of 50 former soldiers who were contracted by a private company for deployment to Iraq, says 500 men are owed US\$12.5 million in wages.

Tevita Fa says he will bring legal action against Global Risk Strategies and its Fiji representative, Lieutenant Col. Sakiusa Raivoce, for making false promises.

Mr. Fa says the men have told him they were promised lucrative pay by Lieutenant Colonel Raivoce in Fiji but once they got to Iraq, they had to sign a contract for lower wages.

“None of these people could return to Fiji, because they didn’t have any money,” Fa said.

## American Samoa victims get \$12.5M from US

**WELLINGTON, New Zealand** (RNZI/PIR)—Almost US\$12.5 million has been handed out to people in American Samoa affected by Tropical Cylone Heta.

A spokesman for the Federal Emergency Management Agency, John Treanor, said that since the disaster relief center opened a week after Heta hit in January, more than 6,000 people have registered for federal assistance.

Just under 5,000 applications have been approved.

FEMA assistance covers severe damage that makes homes unlivable and replaces and repairs essential items damaged by events such as cyclones.

**HAGATNA, Guam** (PDN/PIR)—Willy Flores, who allegedly was part of a scheme to fraudulently obtain \$300,000 from the Bank of Guam, stepped down last night as chairman of the island’s Democratic Party.

His resignation came during a meeting at the Legislature of the party’s central executive committee.

“Willy Flores, the chairman, resigned this evening, so Becky Lujan is the acting chairperson and we set an election to fill the vacancy for April 24,” said Joshua Tenorio, the party’s executive director.

Tenorio said Flores talked about his love for the party and the desire to ensure that the legal issue he is involved in does not detract from the party’s goals.

“He has every faith and confidence that these legal issues that he’s being faced with will be resolved positively for him,” acting party Chairwoman Lujan said.

Flores, a former Democratic senator, is described as an “unindicted co-conspirator” in an indictment handed down last week against former governor’s Chief of Staff Gil Shinohara and businessman Takahisa Goto. He has not been charged in the case.

Flores allegedly submitted fictitious repair and renovation quotes to the bank so \$300,000 could be obtained fraudulently. He allegedly gave \$50,000 to Shinohara and \$130,000 to businessman Keun Yil Kim, who also is described as an unindicted co-conspirator. A check for \$34,500, drawn on Flores’ bank account, allegedly was deposited to Goto’s account.

Although Flores no longer is chairman, he still has a position with

the Democratic Party, Lujan said.

“We have added him to the ranks of our Democratic Leadership Council,” she said.

The council, which is composed of former party chairmen, legislative speakers, governors and delegates, serves as an advisory body to the party, Tenorio said.

Anyone at least 18 years old, registered as a Democrat and eligible to vote can run for the chairman’s position during April’s election, Tenorio said.

Also during last night’s party meeting, attorney Frederick Horecky, who is the Democratic representative on the Guam Election Commission, talked about Attorney General Douglas Moylan’s legal challenge to the island’s primary-election laws, Tenorio said.

Moylan last year sued to prevent primary elections from taking place this year, saying recent federal court rulings show that Guam’s blanket primary process is unconstitutional.

At issue is whether “blanket” primaries, which allow voters to choose candidates from both political parties, violate the rights of political parties.

Guam voters during primary elections are allowed to cross over between races and vote for candidates of any party on the ballot.

“The chairman has tasked Sen. Lou Leon Guerrero and (Yona) Mayor ‘Pedo’ Terlaje to co-chair a committee to come up with some recommendations,” Tenorio said. “The party has decided to have a special meeting on March 4, at 5:30 p.m., to address that and to determine our course of action on the 10th, when we’re summoned to appear in court.”





















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# Asia

## Compensation offer on table in nuke talks

By **ELAINE KURTENBACH**  
ASSOCIATED PRESS WRITER

**BELJING** (AP)—South Korea’s offer to compensate North Korea if it relinquishes its nuclear programs was on the table Thursday as six-country talks reconvened and the United States continued its push for a verifiable end to the North’s ambitions of becoming a nuclear power.

Delegates began the second day of negotiations emphasizing that any conclusions were premature. “It’s just getting

started,” Japan’s delegate, Foreign Ministry Director General Mitoji Yabunaka, said before the talks reconvened Thursday.

In Seoul, a South Korean official made a statement—widely and urgently reported by his country’s media—that the United States and North Korea met privately for the second straight day early Thursday on the sidelines of the talks.

But Unification Minister Jeong Se-hyun’s remark was almost immediately disputed by his own ministry, where a

spokesman could not confirm the new talks. And the South Korean delegation spokesman in Beijing, Shin Bong-kio, said that “we don’t think that it’s true.”

The U.S. Embassy in Beijing said it had no immediate information on any meeting Thursday morning.

The second day of meetings among the two Koreas, China, Russia, Japan and the United States on the nuclear standoff followed a rare, lengthy one-on-one session between high-level officials from Washington and

Pyongyang—the two key players in the dispute.

Neither side gave details of the meeting Wednesday afternoon between U.S. Secretary of State James Kelly and North Korean Vice Foreign Minister Kim Kye Gwan, but the U.S. State Department described it as “useful.”

North Korea and the United States have been at odds over Pyongyang’s nuclear ambitions for years and especially since October 2002, when Kelly said the North told him it had a secret

weapons program based on enriched uranium.

North Korea publicly denies it has a uranium program in addition to its known plutonium-based program, but it brandishes the threat of what it vaguely describes as its “nuclear deterrent” in an effort to extract concessions.

The impoverished North wants aid in return for halting its nuclear programs, and in December demanded economic aid and other U.S. concessions in return for a freeze. Washington said at the time that Pyongyang must not only freeze, but start dismantling, its nuclear programs first.

North Korea also wants a nonaggression treaty with the United States or at least a security guarantee from all five of its negotiating partners.

During the opening of talks Wednesday, Kelly said Pyongyang has nothing to worry about. The United States wants an end to all of the North’s nuclear weapons development but has “no intention of invading or attacking” the country, he said.

“The United States seeks complete, verifiable and irreversible dismantlement of all North Korea’s nuclear programs, both plutonium and uranium,” Kelly said.

## Fire at RP police HQ triggers explosions

**MANILA, Philippines** (AP)—A fire at the Philippine national police headquarters on Wednesday ignited ammunition, triggering numerous explosions and injuring at least three firemen and a police officer.

Thick black smoke billowed from an old warehouse at Camp Crame, where the police ordnance disposal division had stored some unexploded World War II explosives.

Radio reports said the area looked like a war zone.

“We thought Camp Crame was being bombed by terrorists,” said one visitor to the headquarters who declined to be identified.

An initial investigation indicated the fire may have been caused by faulty electrical wiring.

National police chief Hermogenes Ebdane said witnesses saw smoke and flames coming from the roof of the building shortly after a brief electrical outage in the area.

“As of this moment, we believe there was no sabotage, although we’re investigating,” he said.

Adolfo Avenido, chief of the national police force’s health service, said three firemen and a police officer suffered minor shrapnel wounds.

Superintendent Warlito Tubon of the Explosives and Ordnance Disposal Division said the building housed ammunition for M-16 rifles, shotguns and pistols, plus weapons documents and other police supplies.

“It’s fortunate that we have detonated most of these powerful bombs,” he said, referring to assorted wartime explosives stored there.

Firefighters initially couldn’t approach the blazing building because of the loud blasts and popping sounds from exploding small-caliber ammunition. Fumes from tear gas set off by the blaze also hampered firefighters.

Shock waves from the explosions rocked nearby buildings and rattled windows.

The fire was brought under control within two hours, although the building continued to smolder.

## Terror suspect found guilty

**JAKARTA, Indonesia** (AP)—An Indonesian court on Wednesday found the alleged leader of the al-Qaida-linked Jemaah Islamiyah terrorist group guilty of sheltering one of the Bali bombers.

Abu Rusdan, a 43-year-old militant cleric—who allegedly took over Jemaah Islamiyah from the group’s suspected founder, Abu Bakar Bashir, in April 2002—was sentenced to 3 1/2 years in prison for helping Bali bombing suspect Muklas hide from authorities.

“The defendant, Abu Rusdan, has been legally and convincingly proven guilty of committing a crime by hiding the perpetrator of a terror act, and hiding information about the

terror crime,” Judge Mahmud Rohimi said.

As Rohimi finished reading his verdict, more than 100 people chanted “God is great” from the gallery of the packed courtroom in a show of support for Rusdan, who was clad in a gray Muslim tunic and cap.

“I will appeal and I will sue those who have treated me cruelly,” Rusdan told the judge when asked if he accepted the ruling.

Rusdan had told the court that police stripped him naked and beat him until he confessed.

He was convicted of helping hide Ali Gufron—also known as Muklas—who has been sentenced to death for his role in the October 2002 Bali bombings, which killed 202 people.

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# US pressing hunt for bin Laden

By **STEPHEN GRAHAM**  
AP WRITER

**KABUL, Afghanistan** (AP)—The U.S. military said Wednesday that a “renewed sense of urgency” is firing the search for Osama bin Laden, even as it dismissed reports that the fugitive al-Qaida leader had been located near the Afghan-Pakistan border.

The new impetus comes amid plans to provide security to the lawless regions outside the capital, Kabul, before national elections planned for June. President Hamid Karzai also suggested an unprecedented move that could promote peace, saying he would consider talks with a former Taliban leader to promote reconciliation with less extreme elements of the former regime.

“The sands in their hour glass are running out,” Lt. Col. Matthew Beevers, a spokesman for the U.S. military in Afghanistan, said of bin Laden and other fugitives. “We remain committed and reaffirm our effort to track these guys down and get ‘em.”

Still, Beevers played down speculation that American forces had closed in on bin Laden, saying that if coalition forces knew where he was, “we’d already have him.”

The U.S. military is planning

a new push to improve security across the troubled border regions and is rolling out a plan that involves delivering millions in badly needed reconstruction aid to remote areas where a bloody Taliban insurgency is strongest, a move the military says should yield better intelligence.

“It’s a combination of all those that gives us a renewed sense of urgency” in the hunt for top fugitives, Beevers told a news conference in Kabul. “Nothing is for certain but we remain unwavering in our commitment.”

Beevers made no mention of audiotapes purportedly of bin Laden’s top lieutenant, Ayman al-Zawahri, that were broadcast Tuesday on Arabic TV stations, taunting President Bush and threatening more attacks on the United States.

CIA Director George Tenet said Tuesday that the al-Qaida leadership is seriously damaged, even though the group remains committed to attacking the United States.

“We are creating large and growing gaps in the al-Qaida hierarchy,” Tenet told the Senate Intelligence Committee. “And, unquestionably, bringing these key operators to ground disrupted plots that would otherwise have killed Americans.”

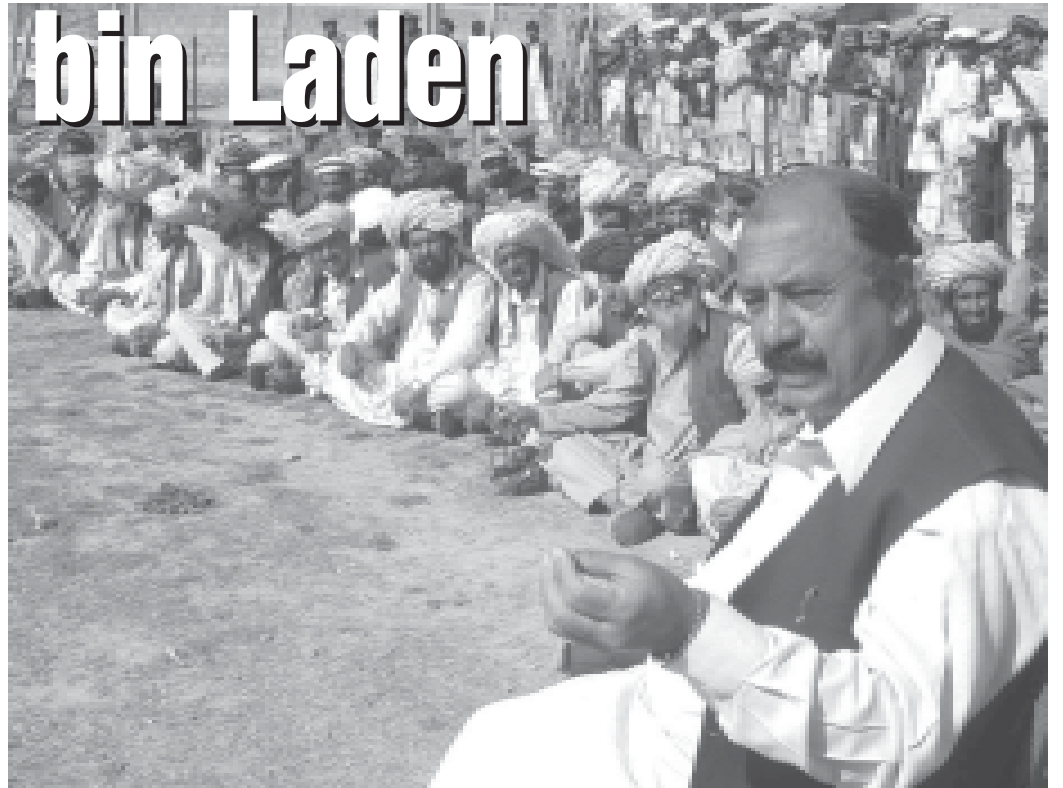
Tenet added that “al-Qaida

central continues to lose operational safe havens, and bin Laden has gone deep under-ground. We are hunting him in some of the most unfriendly regions on Earth. We follow every lead.”

The U.S. military has said it is confident that before the year is out it will catch bin Laden—accused of masterminding the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks—and Taliban leader Mullah Omar.

Rehmatullah Wazir, right, an official of Pakistan government addresses tribal elders about recent operation against al-Qaida fugitives, in Wana, near Pakistan-Afghanistan border Wednesday, Feb. 25, 2004.

AP



## *New urgency sensed in hunt for Osama*

**ISLAMABAD, Pakistan** (AP)—There is a “renewed sense of urgency” in the hunt for top al-Qaida and Taliban fugitives and it is only a matter of time before Osama bin Laden is captured, the U.S. military said Wednesday.

As Pakistan interrogated al-Qaida and Taliban suspects caught in a military sweep through its rugged border region, Lt. Col. Matthew Beevers dismissed speculation

that American forces had closed in on bin Laden. If coalition forces knew where bin Laden was, “we’d already have him,” Beevers said.

But he said there was “a renewed sense of urgency” in the hunt for top fugitives, born partly of hopes for improved intelligence.

“The sands in their hour glass are running out,” he said of bin Laden and other fugitives such as Taliban leader Mullah

Mohammad Omar. “We remain committed and reaffirm our effort to track these guys down and get ‘em.”

Foreign Ministry spokesman Masood Khan refused to speculate on whether any specific al-Qaida figure, including bin Laden, had been captured or whether he might have escaped the security operation. ABC News, meanwhile, reported that he had slipped back into Afghanistan from Pakistan.

Pakistani officials have declined to comment on anything that might be happening in Afghanistan, though they say they are pursuing the “foreign elements” aggressively. The security officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said it is likely some suspects would try to cross back to Afghanistan because of the pressure from stepped up security the tribal regions.

## Accused brain in Tokyo nerve gas attack faces long-awaited verdict

**TOKYO** (AP)—Former cult guru Shoko Asahara stands accused of the most terrifying crimes in modern Japan: masterminding the 1995 nerve gas attack on the Tokyo subways, stamping out rebellious followers and critics, and amassing arsenals of chemical and biological weapons.

Asahara’s eight-year trial reaches its climax on Friday with a verdict—and possible death sentence—on charges he ordered a string of deeds that killed a total of 27 people, panicked Japan and alarmed the world with a deadly mix of high-tech terrorism and religious fanaticism.

The former guru’s lawyers argued in court that Asahara—

whose real name is Chizuo Matsumoto—had lost control over his Aum Shinrikyo cult by the time of the March 20, 1995, Tokyo subway attack, which killed 12 people.

But with abundant testimony of his responsibility by former cultists and Japan’s 99 percent conviction rate, a guilty verdict is widely expected. Eleven of his followers have already been sentenced to hang, though none have been executed yet.

Security was expected to be tight to guard against possible attempts by Asahara followers to disrupt the proceedings.

About 400 police officers were to be posted around the Tokyo court where the verdict will

be read, TBS television reported, though police would not provide details on their plans. Subway lines issued announcements on Thursday urging riders to report any “suspicious objects.”

The verdict will mark a heart-wrenching milestone for victims’ families, who have spent years waiting for justice, though they say the trial’s outcome will provide limited solace. Asahara has the right to appeal.

“My husband died—I think this puts his death to rest,” said Shizue Takahashi, widow of a subway worker who died in the train gassing. “But the fact that my husband was killed, you can’t erase that. That fact remains in my heart.”

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## US cites China, Russia on human rights

**WASHINGTON** (AP)—China has been “backsliding on key human rights issues,” the State Department said Wednesday in a report that also accused Russia of manipulating elections and making threats against opposition parties.

“We saw many developments covering the whole range from the dramatically uplifting to the disappointing,” the State Department said in its annual report on the state of human rights worldwide. The report covers developments in 2003.

Among the most positive developments last year were the rescue of Iraq from “years of grave human rights violations by Saddam Hussein’s regime” and the adoption of a new constitution in Afghanistan through a democratic process, the study said.

On China, the report said 2003 began with hopes that “incremental but unprecedented progress” the previous year would continue.

Instead, the study said, the situation deteriorated. It cited

arrests of democracy activists and individuals who discussed subjects on the Internet deemed sensitive by the government.

The report said the Russian government manipulated the October presidential elections in Chechnya and parliamentary elections held in December.

“Both failed to meet international standards,” the report said. It added that the last major non-state television network disappeared from Russia last year because of government pressure.

# Kashmiri leader may suspend peace talks

**SRINAGAR, India** (AP)—A senior Kashmiri separatist leader threatened Wednesday to suspend peace talks with the Indian government over alleged human rights abuses by security forces in Indian-controlled Kashmir.

If talks unravel, it would be a big blow to the ruling coalition of Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee. His coalition partners have just started their re-election campaign and their promises include improved relations with Pakistan and a solution to the Kashmir dispute which has claimed more than 65,000 lives.

Human rights groups and the All Parties Hurriyat Conference,

an umbrella organization of political and religious groups seeking Indian Kashmir’s independence or merger with Islamic Pakistan, allege that police and troops routinely abuse civilians in Kashmir and say that nearly a dozen people have died in custody since January.

“The behavior of the Indian security forces is unforgivable. If the terror they are spreading in the countryside doesn’t stop we will have to rethink our decision to continue peace talks,” Abbas Ansari told a news conference in Srinagar, the summer capital of India’s Jammu-Kashmir state.

Ansari heads the five-person Hurriyat team that met with

Deputy Prime Minister Lal Krishna Advani last month, the first such talks with a high-level government official. Advani promised to review complaints about security forces killing people in custody, treating civilians as combatants and the harassment of women.

Five villagers were killed last week in a gun battle between the Indian army and militants. A survivor and other villagers said the soldiers used them as human shields, forcing them to wear military uniforms and clear the bush as the soldiers advanced toward the militants.

On Feb. 19, villagers in remote Ahlan-Gadol village accused the forces of killing a

civilian and later declaring that the slain man was a militant.

The Hurriyat will watch the situation until the end of February, Ansari said. If there is no improvement on the human rights front, it would “pull out of the peace process with New Delhi.” The next round of talks is slated for March.

In January, Vajpayee agreed to senior-level talks with Kashmiri separatists and his Pakistani counterpart, President Gen. Pervez Musharraf, pledged not to support terrorism directed against India. India accuses Pakistan of training and arming the Islamic guerrillas fighting for Kashmir’s independence, a charge Pakistan denies.

## China arrests, indicts two unofficial church leaders

**BEIJING** (AP)—China has indicted two leaders of the unofficial Protestant church for allegedly obtaining state secrets amid a deepening crackdown on worship outside government controls, an overseas monitoring group said Wednesday.

Church historian Liu Fenggang and psychiatrist Xu Yonghai were indicted on Monday in the eastern city of Hangzhou, Human Rights in China reported. Authorities in the city have demolished unofficial church halls and reportedly detained 300 preachers and worshippers.

The charges, authorized under China’s sweeping state security laws, carry prison terms of five years to life. Human Rights in China said they appeared to be related to efforts by the two men to document the Hangzhou crackdown.

It said both men’s wives have been told to hire lawyers to defend them. Such trials are usually held in secret and almost always result in guilty verdicts.

Human Rights in China called the indictments further evidence of China’s crackdown on unofficial churches, despite its repeated claims to permit freedom of worship.

“The government should certainly feel ashamed of such actions, which in no way conform with China’s claims of respecting freedom of worship,” the group’s president, Liu Qing, said in a statement.

China allows worship only in the official Catholic and Protestant churches, whose clergy, activities and doctrines must all be vetted and approved by Communist Party cadres. Unregistered congregations are regarded as subversive channels for foreign infiltration and their adherents are routinely harassed and fined, and sometimes sent to labor camps.

Chinese officials routinely deny violating religious freedoms, saying detained activists are criminals who violated Chinese law and imperiled national security.

Officials contacted at the Hangzhou prosecutor’s office refused to comment to reporters or denied any knowledge of Xu and Liu’s cases and refused to transfer the phone to other departments.

Last summer, authorities in Hangzhou demolished unofficial church halls, including private homes where services were held, and arrested worshippers and clergy in one of the most sweeping crackdowns in recent years.

Liu, a longtime activist in the underground church and pro-democracy movement, interviewed detainees upon their release and documented the destruction. He was arrested in Hangzhou in October. Computer technician Zhang Shengqi has also reportedly been charged with leaking state secrets on suspicion of helping post Liu’s findings on the Internet.

## Arabs urged to look East for role models

**LANGKAWI, Malaysia** (AP)—Jordan’s King Abdullah II said Wednesday the Arab world has “a lot to learn” from Asia and urged Middle East countries to look east rather than to the West for role models in political and economic reform.

Abdullah, whose moderate Islamic nation is a key Western ally, told a gathering of business leaders and legislators from both regions that Asia is way ahead of the Middle East in areas such as economic integration, democratization and the education of its people.

“We on the other side have a lot to learn,” Abdullah told delegates at a World Economic Forum conference in Malaysia.

More than 100 officials from 36 countries attended the conference on the resort island of Langkawi to discuss trade and economic issues and ways the two regions can help each other eradicate poverty and improve education.

Delegates were to adopt a joint statement later Wednesday. The results will be presented to the WEF’s meeting of world and business leaders in Amman, Jordan, in May and at the East Asia Economic Summit in Seoul, South Korea, in June.

Abdullah said reform was “very sorely needed” in the Middle East, and urged the private sector to put more pressure on the region’s governments to become more open and accountable.

Few Arab countries have democratically elected governments, and critics say the closed nature of royal rule in countries such as Saudi Arabia has led to resentment that fuels extremism and hinders economic development.

Abdullah did not mention Iraq or the Israeli-Palestinian crisis directly in his remarks to the conference, but said economic development was part of the answer to the world’s current problems.

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# Attack at coalition base kills 10 Iraqis

By SAMEER N. YACOUB  
AP WRITER

**HILLAH, Iraq** (AP)—Suicide bombers detonated explosives outside a Polish-run base Wednesday, killing 10 Iraqis and wounding more than 100 people, more than half of them coalition soldiers. The United States arrested seven guerrillas believed linked to al-Qaida in an early morning raid to the north.

The attack in Hillah, the third suicide bombing of security targets in two weeks, was part of a wider effort “to isolate us from the Iraqi people,” coalition military commander Lt. Gen. Ricardo Sanchez told reporters in Tikrit.

Coalition and military officials said at least 106 people were hurt in the blasts, which happened in the Hayy Babil neighborhood near Camp Charlie. The wounded included 32 Iraqis and 26 Poles, as well as Hungarians, Bulgarians, Filipinos and an American.

The casualty toll could have been much higher had guards not opened fire and prevented the bombers from entering the camp. One truck exploded under the gunfire and another blew up after hitting a concrete barrier.

The 7:15 a.m. blasts—from 1,540 pounds of explosives—flattened 11 homes nearby and

blew down the entire sides of several other houses in this town south of Baghdad.

Earlier Wednesday, U.S. troops arrested seven militants believed linked to al-Qaida in the turbulent city of Baqouba, north of the capital, the military said. It gave no details on the nationalities of the militants. There was no indication the attacks and the U.S. raid were directly linked.

Troops from the 4th Infantry Division carried out the raid early Wednesday targeting an “anti-coalition cell” that may have ties to Osama bin Laden’s terror group, a statement from the U.S. command said.

Suicide attacks have killed 300 people, mostly Iraqis, since the beginning of the year. They have fueled speculation that Islamic extremists, possibly linked to al-Qaida, were playing a greater role in the anti-coalition insurgency. U.S. military officials had believed the attacks were spearheaded by Saddam Hussein loyalists.

The stepped-up violence could be aimed at preventing U.S. administrators from handing over power to the Iraqis on June 30, when Iraqi security forces would also take a more prominent role against the insurgency.

Two suicide bombings killed

more than 100 Iraqis last week. Polish Gen. Mieczyslaw Bieniek, commander of the 9,500-member Polish military contingent, said Wednesday’s bombings, about 55 miles south of the capital, were a “well-coordinated terrorist attack.”

Mohyee Mokheef, a 50-year-old cafe owner who lives in the neighborhood, said he was having breakfast when he heard a faint first explosion and a second, louder one that shattered the windows in his home. He blamed al-Qaida and an Iraq-based group linked to it, Ansar al-Islam.

“I saw dead and injured Iraqis lying on the ground,” he

told The Associated Press. “I suspect that Ansar al-Islam and al-Qaida were behind these operations because they want to create strife between Sunnis and Shiites and between the Shiites and Americans. They want to derail the elections process.”

Most of the wounded among multinational troops were hurt by flying debris and glass. The injuries were not life-threatening.

The attack happened as members of Iraq’s Governing Council distanced themselves further from the U.S. idea of holding regional caucuses to elect an interim government after the planned June 30 hand over.

## Reformer: Iranians don’t want revolution

By BRIAN MURPHY  
AP WRITER

**TEHRAN, Iran** (AP)—The leader of Iran’s ruling clerics must be made more accountable to reform demands and should shed some powers to break a “vicious circle” of control, the most prominent dissident lawmaker and brother of the country’s president said Wednesday.

But Mohammad Reza Khatami—who was deputy parliament speaker and among more than 2,400 candidates blackballed from Friday’s elections—warned against public demonstrations to demand change, saying Iranians have no appetite for another revolution.

In an interview with The Associated Press, he offered glimpses of a high-stakes gambit: trying to pressure Iran’s supreme leader and the Islamic power base that controls everything from foreign policy to the media.

“They have no accountability to any part of the government and to the people ... We have a vicious circle here,” Khatami said during the interview in the headquarters of his party, the Islamic Participation Front.

The strategy of directly challenging supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei could win applause from many Iranians frustrated by stalled efforts for more political and social openness.

But it carries clear risks. The Islamic leadership has come down hard in the past on those perceived as threats to the system.

On Tuesday, Khatami and other pro-reform lawmakers made public a letter sent to Khamenei accusing him of allowing freedoms to be “trampled in the name of Islam.”

The letter served as a parting salvo by banned reform candidates calling the elections a “parliamentary coup” and

urging for a voter boycott. It also was a taboo-breaking missive against the country’s top religious and political authority—whose supporters say holds divine right to rule.

Khatami said Khamenei should dismantle some of his power structure to allow elected officials room to make key decisions.

“They know what the people want and, because of this, I think they should respond to this will of the people ... even if they don’t like it,” said Khatami, whose brother, President Mohammad Khatami, has greatly lost his appeal after backing down in attempts to postpone the elections.

He added that reformers want to reach a point “for people to believe they could change the leader.”

It would be a huge challenge. Khamanei and his inner

circle have vast and powerful resources, including militia forces and the judiciary. In recent years, conservatives have detained or intimidated hundreds of reformers and muzzled dozens of publications.

The rulers’ almost unlimited power has become a crucial issue in the battle over the elections.

The Guardian Council, a 12-member panel appointed by Khamenei, issued the mass disqualifications through its powers to vet political candidates. The blacklist means that the 290-seat parliament will likely return to the control of hard-liners.

But a sharp drop in voter turnout—particularly in the cities—would be interpreted as convincing public backing for liberals.

Khatami hoped for less than 25 percent turnout in the capital,

Tehran, and anticipated 40 percent to 50 percent nationwide. In 2000, parliament elections drew more than 67 percent of voters around Iran and nearly 47 percent in Tehran.

“I think we will suffer from some pressures overall - more and more than before - but it’s an opportunity for us to... come back to the community and come back to the people,” he said.

But he said it was “too risky for the time being” to try to organize mass demonstrations.

“People are not ready for another revolution because they are not happy with the result of the (1979 Islamic) revolution and they don’t know what would happen after [another] revolution,” he said.

Seeking changes within the system still appears the goal of reformers despite the current ballot boycott.

## Sambagrouppreachessafe sex

**RIO DE JANEIRO, Brazil** (AP)—Carnival has always been a celebration of flesh and abandon, but as celebrations get under way a prominent samba group is reminding revelers not to forget their condoms.

Carnival doesn’t get under way officially until Friday, but the airwaves are crowded with the sound of this year’s most popular samba songs. And among the most irreverent is Grande Rio group’s “Let’s Wear the Little Shirt, My Love”—slang for wearing a condom.

To make sure everyone pays attention, the Grande Rio’s floats feature giant statues of Adam and Eve simulating sex and costumes featuring sexual positions out of the Kama Sutra.

The group says the pro-condom message is an important social statement, even if it clashes with Brazil’s

Roman Catholic traditions. Carnival celebrates the beginning of the Christian season of Lent.

“We very much respect the Church because we’re a Catholic country but we also recognize the importance of using condoms because there’s an epidemic in the world,” said Liege Monteiro, spokeswoman for Grande Rio.

The group has earned praise from the United Nation’s anti-AIDS program. The federal government’s anti-AIDS program also plans to distribute 10 million free condoms during the five-day bash.

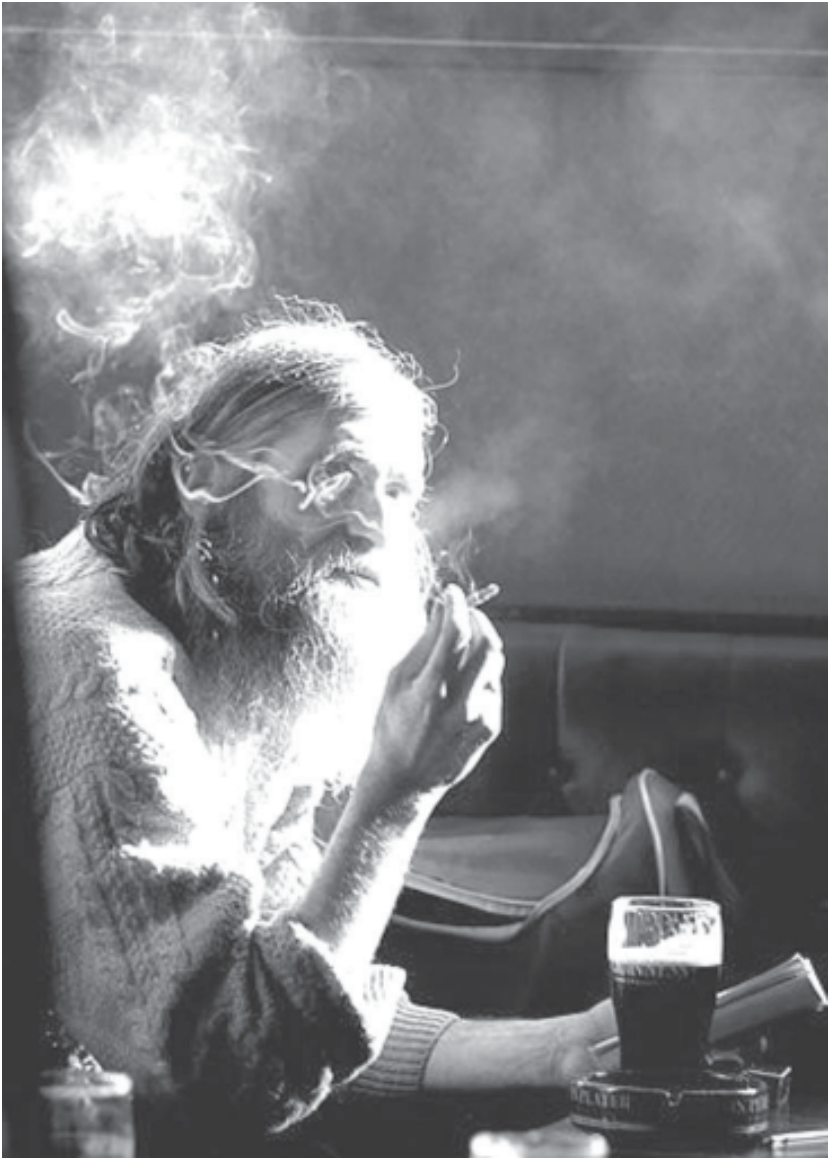
The reaction from the Catholic church has been relatively restrained, though Grande Rio’s explicit floats and costumes have raised some eyebrows. Rio’s archbishop, Rev. Eusebio Oscar Scheid, said organizers should make sure the group doesn’t go too far.

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# Ireland to ban smoking in pubs, at work



An unidentified man smokes in a bar in Dublin Wednesday, Feb. 18, 2004.

By SHAWN POGATCHNIK  
AP WRITER

**DUBLIN, Ireland** (AP)—Francie O'Connor has been coming into smoke-filled Dublin pubs as long as he can remember, once at his father's side, now at his son's. For him, a pint and a cigarette go hand in hand.

No longer. Inspired by similar restrictions in California and New York City, Ireland will become the first country in Europe to crack down on public smoking, the government announced Wednesday. As of March 29, smoking will be forbidden in all enclosed workplaces—including the country's 10,000 pubs.

Thirty percent of Irish adults smoke, but opinion polls indicate the plan has widespread support. To hard-core smokers and traditionalists like O'Connor, however, it's something close to sacrilege.

"A man comes to a pub for a bit of happiness in his life. It can be more of a home than your own home," the 59-year-old handyman said between drags on his Marlboro Light, his son Daithi adopting an identical pose on the bench beside him. "If the goal is to live longer and less

happily, well, we're on the right road."

Pub owners have threatened to challenge the government in court to delay or water down the ban. They argue that it will drive away up to half of their customers—not just the smokers, but the smokers' friends.

But Health Minister Micheal Martin, a nonsmoker who rarely ventures into a pub, has dismissed proposals to create separate smoking sections with modernized ventilation systems. He says such measures don't lessen the damage done to the bar staff obliged to work among smokers.

He stressed Wednesday that nothing could protect people from secondhand smoke besides an outright ban. He dismissed the pub owners' predictions and noted he has the support of the unions representing bar staff.

"I am confident that people will adjust, just as they did when cinemas, theaters, hairdressing salons, airplanes and numerous other settings went smoke-free," he said.

In the most upscale quarters of southside Dublin, some pubs have embraced the plans as an opportunity to redesign, creating terraces with gas heaters to encourage smokers to sit

outdoors and beyond the ban's reach.

But on the rougher-hewn north side, most pubs remain blue-collar and plain, and the scent of smoke tends to hit as soon as the door opens.

In the Hut pub in Phibsborough on Wednesday, about a dozen lunchtime customers sat at the long oak bar or in simple tables in the back. Every group had at least one smoker.

The barman said he didn't want to talk about the ban, but his customers couldn't stop.

"If you try to get rid of the smokers, this pub will be more empty than a seminary," Seamus Mahony said. "You'll live to a ripe ol' age. In the poor house."

"It'll never happen," said Gina Lawlor, 42, a bank teller on a break. "It's bad enough I can't have a smoke at work."

"The government will have a revolution on its hands. I'll have Micheal's head on a pike yet!" blustered John Owens, 27, to the laughter of his drinking mates, all of them telephone company workers in between callouts.

"Seriously, though," he said, "I suppose we'll end up smoking outside. We'll all die of the cold and that will be that—no more problem."

## Lottery millionaire's troubles get worse

By BETH GARDINER  
AP WRITER

**LONDON** (AP)—Michael Carroll picked up his \$18 million lottery check wearing a court-issued electronic tracing tag.

And the longtime petty criminal's worries have only gotten worse since he became a rich man.

Carroll—dubbed the "Lotto lout" in the British press—recently pleaded guilty to drug possession. He also is accused of receiving \$2,000 worth of stolen power tools. Those are just the latest entries on Carroll's long rap sheet, which includes brushes with the law both before and after his big win.

The not-so-lucky big-money winner's travails have gotten heavy media coverage, from the \$2,500 fine he paid for ducking \$9.50 train fares before he came into his fortune, to the \$1,500 he handed over to a transport company whose school bus he had defaced.

His lawyer, Neil Meachem, told a judge after Carroll's most-recent guilty plea that he had been having marital troubles—news reports say his wife left

him—and that his 2002 winnings were partly to blame for his many troubles.

"However much money one has or acquires ... it doesn't necessarily buy you happiness, and he has had a number of problems," Meachem said, acknowledging that his client had possessed a small amount of cocaine and \$2,900 worth of marijuana.

"There have been difficulties because he has received threats of a particular kind," the lawyer said. "In some quarters his good fortune had not made him popular. To that extent he concedes he has sought solace in drugs."

Noting his extensive criminal record, the judge said she would seriously consider giving him jail time when she pronounces a sentence next month.

Meachem declined when contacted by The Associated Press to comment further or to explain who was threatening the 20-year-old Carroll. He said his client, who lives in Norfolk, in eastern England, also did not want to speak.

The National Lottery emphasized that Carroll's situation was unusual, saying that 98 percent of the 1,600 millionaires and multimillionaires it's

created since its inception a decade ago report being as happy or happier than they were before their wins.

Carroll's troubles began long before his victory.

When he collected his prize, he said he'd been in court "countless" times and was living on unemployment benefits after losing his job at a chocolate factory. He had also served two months in a young offenders institution for "joy-riding," taking and then abandoning a car.

He promised then to mend his ways and said he never planned to work again.

"I have to say I was completely speechless and was so happy I couldn't help but cry," he told reporters at the time, describing his feelings when he learned he'd hit the jackpot.

He is now contesting an accusation that he received stolen tools, and he has pleaded guilty to driving a mo-ped without insurance and after his license had been temporarily revoked for drunken driving.

He's also been fined \$23,000 for claiming unemployment benefits while he was working as a garbage collector before his win.

## Family remembers Lopez Portillo at vigil

**MEXICO CITY** (AP)—Friends and relatives said goodbye to Jose Lopez Portillo during a restricted vigil Wednesday for the 83-year-old former president, who died a day earlier.

A Mexican flag was draped over the coffin of the man who led the country from 1976-82. Guests included at least three former presidents. President Vicente Fox sent Interior Secretary Santiago Creel in his place and issued a statement of condolences to the Lopez Portillo family.

Lopez Portillo, who died from complications of pneumonia, was to be buried Friday in a private ceremony at a military cemetery.

The vigil was a semiprivate affair at Mexico's Defense Department, attended only by a few dozen close friends, family members and dignitaries.

Mourning did not extend to all Mexicans. The morning tabloid Metro published a front-page photo of Lopez Portillo and the headline "He Kicks the Bucket."

Sworn in during one of Mexico's worst economic recessions, Lopez Portillo used an oil boom and a flood of foreign loans to bring the country unprecedented prosperity.

But his administration was marred by spectacular corruption scandals and when the bottom fell out of the world

crude oil market, the peso had to be devalued three times, devastating the lives of many Mexicans.

"He took some positive actions and made some important errors," said Congressman Manuel Camacho Solis of the leftist Democratic Revolution Party. "Among the things that did not work out, there was the economic strategy that his government followed."

For years after his term, whenever Lopez Portillo appeared in public, people would jeer and boo.

After his presidency, he became embroiled in family squabbles. In 2000, he married retired film star Sasha Montenegro, angering his children.

## Vatican: Catholic, Orthodox rift should end

By ANNELI NERMAN  
AP WRITER

**MOSCOW** (AP)—A top Vatican emissary on Wednesday said the Catholic and Russian Orthodox churches should establish a telephone hot line to defuse differences that have kept the two faiths at odds for centuries.

Cardinal Walter Kasper, head of the Vatican's Pontifical Council for the Promotion of Christian Unity, also said he hoped the churches could solve differences "in the spirit of ecumenism and not rivalry."

Kasper arrived in Moscow on Tuesday for sensitive talks aimed at bridging the gap between the churches. Strained ties have prevented Pope John Paul II from fulfilling his dream of traveling to Russia.

It was the first high-level visit by a Catholic representative in four years, and Kasper told congregants at Moscow's Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception on Wednesday that it should "give a new impulse" to the churches' ties.

Tensions between the Orthodox, the dominant Christian faith in Russia and Ukraine, and Roman Catholics have deep historical roots. But they have increased markedly since the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991 and communist restrictions on religion faded.

In particular, the head of the Russian Orthodox Church, Patriarch Alexy II, has accused Catholics of aggressive missionary activity in Russia and other predominantly

Orthodox former Soviet Republics. He also alleges that Greek Catholics in western Ukraine, who retain Eastern-rite rituals but recognize the pope's supremacy, have accelerated their expansion into traditionally Orthodox eastern and southern Ukraine.

The Vatican rejects the accusations. Catholics have sought to recover churches that belonged to them before the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution and attract new followers.

Kasper said Wednesday that the Catholic Church did not have a "purposeful policy" of bringing the Gospel to Orthodox believers, but he said his church "has the right to exist in the countries of Eastern Europe, with their Orthodox majority, and fulfill its mission."

"Both sides must respect religious freedom and freedom of conscience," he said. "However, this respect differs from active missionary work among Orthodox believers."

He suggested setting up a commission to work on what he called common rules of behavior, as well as a hot line allowing each side to inform the other promptly of problems.

"It's impossible to resolve problems when after every mistake the other side breaks up the dialogue," Kasper said.

Hinting that Communism had sapped the Orthodox Church of energy, he expressed hope that the Orthodox would become increasingly active.

"Our missionary responsibilities must be fulfilled in the spirit of ecumenism and not rivalry," he said.



# Russia plans new generation of weapons

By VLADIMIR ISACHENKOV  
AP WRITER

**MOSCOW (AP)**—After two failed missile launches during highly publicized military maneuvers, President Vladimir Putin announced plans Wednesday to deploy a new generation of strategic weapons and said Moscow may build new missile defenses.

Some analysts said the new weapons may be warheads that zigzag on their way to a target, an idea that dates to the Soviet era. Putin did not say exactly what they were.

Putin spoke after watching Wednesday’s launch of a military satellite from the Plesetsk cosmodrome in northern Russia, which was part of a massive exercise of the nation’s strategic forces described as the largest in more than 20 years.

“The experiments conducted during these maneuvers ... have proven that state-of-the art technical complexes will enter service with the Russian Strategic Missile Forces in the near future,” Putin said in remarks broadcast by Russian television stations.

The new weapons will be “capable of hitting targets continents away at hypersonic speed, with high precision and the ability of broad maneuver both in terms of altitude and direction of their flight,” he said.

Putin spoke after two embarrassing missile launch failures Tuesday and Wednesday. A missile launch from the Novomoskovsk nuclear submarine set for Tuesday didn’t take place, though the navy later claimed that it had never planned the test despite numerous

statements to the contrary.

On Wednesday, the navy sent another Northern Fleet nuclear submarine to the Barents Sea to repeat the launch - only to fail again. The missile launched from the Karelia submarine started drifting from its flight path 98 seconds after launch and self-destructed automatically, Russian navy spokesman Capt. Igor Dygalo told The Associated Press.

Retired Adm. Vladimir Chernavin, the former Soviet navy chief, said that until the cause of the failed launch is found, “it’s hard to talk about full combat readiness of the navy’s strategic nuclear forces,” the Interfax-Military News Agency reported.

State television kept mum about the failures. Putin didn’t directly mention them, though he did acknowledge some shortcomings in the exercises.

“We have not had such exercises for almost 20 years,” Putin said. “Naturally, in the course of such exercises there are minuses and pluses ... and those minuses will be detected and clearly we’ll be drawing conclusions. It is only for the better.”

The military exercises were widely seen as part of campaign efforts to play up Putin’s image as a leader determined to restore Russia’s military power and global clout ahead of the March 14 presidential election. He is expected to win easily.

In his comments, Putin focused on the new weapons, which he said would be unrivaled in the world. He said they would ensure Russia’s safety for years to come.

Putin said that Russia was continuing research in missile defense systems and may build

a new missile shield. Russia now has a missile defense system protecting Moscow that was designed in the 1970s and modernized in the 1990s.

Some military analysts said his statement could indicate the revival of Soviet designs for nuclear warheads that zigzag on their final approach to a target, confusing missile defenses.

Such behavior would make a missile hard to intercept and destroy.

“On the other hand, its accuracy leaves much to be desired, making it unfit for dealing precision strikes,” said Pavel Felgenhauer, an independent Russian military analyst.

He said that the research on zigzagging warheads began in the 1980s in response to Ronald Reagan’s “Star Wars” program.

Putin said the new weapon systems wouldn’t be directed against the United States, which has backed out of the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty and is developing a missile defense system of its own.

“Modern Russia has no imperial ambitions or hegemonist strivings,” he said.

Alexander Pikayev, a Moscow-based expert in Russian nuclear forces, said that the military had experimented with a maneuvering warhead during a missile launch several years ago, but voiced doubt about Russia’s ability to deploy such weapons any time soon.

Putin could also have been referring to a ballistic missile system being developed for submarines, said Ivan Safranchuk, the head of the Moscow office of the Center for Defense Information, a Washington-based think-tank. Little is known about the



AP  
Russian President Vladimir Putin, right, watches the launch of the “Molniya M “ booster rocket with a military satellite in Plesetsk cosmodrome, Russia, Wednesday, Feb. 18, 2004. Behind Putin is Anatoli Bashlakov, commander of Plesetsk.

system, called Bulava.

In Plesetsk on Wednesday, Putin watched the successful launch of a Molniya-M booster rocket, which carried a Kosmos

military satellite into orbit.

Later in the day, the military successfully test-fired a Topol ballistic missile from Plesetsk and an RS-18 ballistic missile

from the Baikonur cosmodrome which Russia leases from Kazakhstan. The two are reliable weapons systems dating from the Soviet era.

## White House may alter Iraqi self-rule plan

By BARRY SCHWEID  
AP DIPLOMATIC WRITER

**WASHINGTON (AP)**—The Bush administration is weighing a major shift in its plan for transition to Iraqi self-rule as it waits for U.N. help in settling differences among Iraqi leaders on how to meet the July 1 U.S. deadline.

Under active consideration is extending and expanding the U.S.-appointed Governing Council so that it could take interim control in Baghdad until a legislature could be elected, a senior U.S. official said Wednesday.

The administration is eager to see if U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan approves of the idea, the official told The Associated Press on condition of anonymity.

The current U.S. plan to choose an interim assembly through a complicated system of caucuses has run into hurdles as Shiite clerics demand direct elections and some members of the Council who approved the plan in the first place now doubt that it would work.

Annan is expected to support the administration and advise against direct elections for an interim government in Iraq, but will delay further recommendations until he consults with other governments, three U.S. officials said.

The delay is expected to last at least a week, one official said.

Annan has decided to restrict his immediate conclusions to agreeing with the administration that the direct elections proposed by Shiite clerics are not feasible before July 1, the officials said.

The administration is looking to the United Nations to help restore self-rule in Iraq in a way that has the approval of a wide range of Iraqi leaders.

Annan is due to receive a firsthand report at the United Nations on Thursday from Lakhdar Brahimi, his special adviser who led a U.N. team to Iraq to assess election possibilities and other possible changes that might be acceptable to a wide range of Iraqi leaders.

While waiting for a U.N. recommendation, the Bush administration has let it be

known it intends to stick to the July 1 deadline for transition to Iraqi self-rule but that all other provisions in the plan are subject to revision.

Secretary of State Colin Powell said Tuesday that he was keeping an open mind until he heard from Annan after Brahimi reported to the secretary-general.

After conferring with Brahimi, the official said, Annan intended to meet with ministers from some two dozen countries, including the five permanent members of the U.N. Security Council - the United States, Britain, France, Russia and China.

The plan approved last November by U.S. administrator L. Paul Bremer III and the Governing Council calls for caucuses to be held in Iraq’s 18 provinces. Then 15-member selection committees, chosen by the Council and local councils, would screen participants who would select an interim assembly.

The U.S. occupation would end July 1, and direct elections would not be held in Iraq until next year.

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# Haiti police desert posts after uprising

By MARK STEVENSON  
AP WRITER

**CAP-HAITIEN, Haiti (AP)**—Frightened police barricaded themselves inside their station Wednesday and said they could not repel a threatened rebel attack on Haiti's second-largest city, the last major government bastion in the north. Officers in other towns deserted their posts with no guerrillas in sight.

Even as police made clear they were too scared to patrol the streets of Cap-Haitien, militant defenders of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide vowed to take a stand against the 2-week-old rebellion, which has killed some 60 people and has attracted leaders with murderous backgrounds.

"We have machetes and guns, and we will resist," said carpenter Pierre Frandley. "The police might have been scared, but the people got together and organized. ... We blocked the streets."

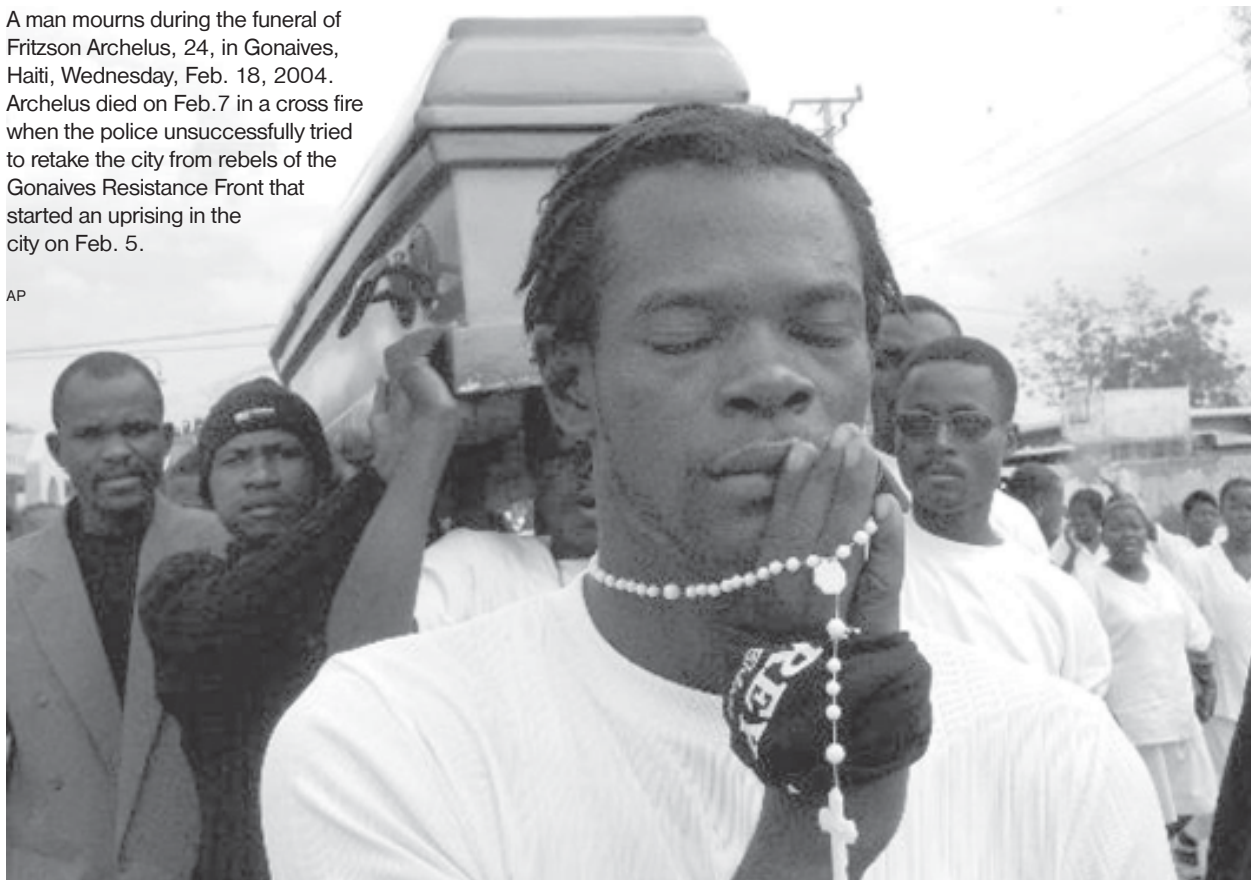
There were fears rebels already have infiltrated the northern port and more were headed that way.

U.S. officials worry the current crisis would only worsen if Aristide is forced to flee. One option being internally discussed is a transfer of power, with Aristide's consent, to a temporary governing board made up of Haitians who would run the country until a new president was elected. It is not clear how much support that proposal has at top levels of the Bush administration.

Aristide rebuffed Bush administration suggestions that he convene early presidential elections as a way to defuse

A man mourns during the funeral of Fritzson Archelus, 24, in Gonaives, Haiti, Wednesday, Feb. 18, 2004. Archelus died on Feb. 7 in a cross fire when the police unsuccessfully tried to retake the city from rebels of the Gonaives Resistance Front that started an uprising in the city on Feb. 5.

AP



the crisis, a senior U.S. official said Wednesday.

Although the administration has said it is opposed to any Haitian opposition attempt to drive Aristide from office, Bush officials are privately discussing ideas for a possible constitutional succession before Aristide's term expires in February 2006.

Haitian government spokesman Mario Dupuy called both options "unacceptable."

"They are tantamount to admitting the legitimacy of a coup d'etat against the government," he told The Associated Press.

As Haiti's beleaguered government pleaded in vain for international help, former soldiers ousted in a 1994 U.S. military intervention crossed from the Dominican Republic to join the rebellion.

"The army is no longer demobilized. The army is mobilized,"

said Jean-Baptiste Joseph, a former army sergeant who had headed a group of demobilized soldiers before being jailed in the 1990s for plotting insurrection.

He spoke in Hinche, a town of 50,000 at a strategic crossroads in Haiti's agriculture-rich Artibonite district, which was seized Monday by some 50 rebels led by a former death squad leader.

Amnesty International warned "the specter of past violations continues to

haunt Haiti" and that the newly emerged rebel leaders have "a horrific track record when it comes to human rights."

Their arrival means "fears of a mass population outflow from Haiti are bound to increase," the human rights organization warned, recalling the tens of thousands of Haitian boatpeople who fled to U.S. shores to escape the 1991-1994 military dictatorship.

One sign that a refugee crisis may be imminent would be a large-scale construction of boats. State Department spokesman Richard Boucher said there are no signs of such activity, but the administration wants to "make sure that we're prepared should something happen."

The rebels have chased police from more than a dozen towns and cut supply lines to northern Haiti from Port-au-Prince, the capital to the south, and from the western Dominican Republic, which shares the island of Hispaniola with Haiti. Dominican soldiers said Wednesday they arrested four fleeing Haitian police along the sparsely guarded border.

Food and fuel prices have soared behind rebel lines; electricity and telephone service, always erratic, has been cut totally in many towns. Most vulnerable are nearly 300,000 drought-stricken peasants dependent on food aid.

The U.N. Security Council on Wednesday threw its weight behind Caribbean and Latin American efforts to find a peaceful political solution. The statement came at the behest of Chile, whose ambassador, Heraldo Munoz, said there was no discussion about sending U.N. peacekeepers.

## 3 European leaders agree on economic plan

**BERLIN (AP)**—German, French and British leaders agreed Wednesday on broad proposals aimed at making Europe the world's premier economic power this decade, but they drew criticism from countries who were left out of the summit.

Demonstrating unity after last year's divisions over Iraq, German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder, French President Jacques Chirac and British Prime Minister Tony Blair called for a fresh push to cut red tape, promote new technologies and avert a crisis in social programs that Europeans hold dear.

The summit at the chancellery in Berlin came at a crucial time for the European Union, deadlocked in efforts to give itself a constitution as 10 new members - mostly former communist nations of eastern Europe - line up to

join on May 1, raising membership to 25 countries.

"Let's be frank about this: We came together after a very difficult period in international relations when we were on different sides of a particular issue," Blair told a news conference, referring to the Iraq war that he supported and the two others vehemently opposed.

All three leaders emphasized the need for changes to make Europe more business-friendly and reduce unemployment - but also to uphold welfare-state comforts financed by a shrinking pool of working people as Europe's population ages.

"We must change the social security systems we have built up in our countries," Schroeder said. "Only if we change them will we be able to keep them. Only if we change them will they be affordable."

Schroeder has faced stiff resistance since he launched limited welfare-state reforms last year. Chirac, whose country has seen massive protests against cuts to pension benefits, echoed the German leader's remarks.

"Reforms are necessary if we want to avoid seeing our system lead us to situations that would be totally dramatic in the 20 years to come," he said. "We must face - and we are well aware it - the aging of our populations."

The three leaders offered few specific solutions but noted problems that have dogged Europe for years: too little spending on research and development, bureaucratic hurdles to launching businesses, widespread early retirement.

Citing the EU's ambition of overtaking the United States as the world's leading economic power by

2010, the leaders acknowledged that "growth and productivity in Europe remain too weak."

Other EU nations such as Spain and Italy expressed worry that the three countries were forming a new, exclusive club to run Europe.

"Beware. Nobody in Europe is ready to be a second-class citizen. Europe is made up of 25 countries, not of three," Italy's European affairs minister, Rocco Buttiglione, told British Broadcasting Corp. radio shortly before the summit.

The leaders in Berlin rejected such concerns.

"We don't want to dominate anyone, least of all Europe," Schroeder said. "In the end, the problems are similar all over."

Blair said the three countries comprise almost half of Europe's population and more than half of its wealth.

## Chavez said avoiding recall vote

**CARACAS, Venezuela (AP)**—By accusing Washington of conspiring to topple him, President Hugo Chavez is trying to turn attention away from a possible referendum on his rule, his foes said Wednesday.

"Every time there is an internal conflict, he goes for a verbal confrontation with the United States to turn attention away from conflict at home. That's his game," said opposition lawmaker Pastor Heydra.

Venezuela's elections council is verifying an opposition petition for a recall vote, which could be held later this year. Chavez says he will respect the council's decision but also claims

the petition is fraud-ridden.

Heydra said Chavez is trying to accuse the United States of bias in Venezuela's elections process and discredit its role as one of several nations attempting to resolve Venezuela's political crisis.

The United States and five other nations known as the "Group of Friends" have endorsed a possible referendum as a way out of that crisis.

In his strongest statement on the issue so far, Chavez on Tuesday reiterated claims that the United States was behind a failed 2002 coup and is helping his adversaries try to stage another rebellion.

## New Zealanders return to flooded homes

**WELLINGTON, New Zealand (AP)**—Hundreds of families returned to their flood ravaged homes Thursday as the clean up began from a powerful storm that ravaged parts of New Zealand.

Rivers fed by a massive downpour earlier this week tore through levees and inundated tens of thousands of acres of farmland. Powerful winds toppled trees, ripped down power cables and tore off roofs.

Some disrupted road and rail systems were still closed Thursday after what is expected to be the nation's costliest storm.

Weather forecaster MetService warned of a new storm packing winds of 75 mph and torrential rains heading toward the country.

National dairy cooperative Fonterra said flood-hit farmers have so far dumped more than 2.5 million gallons of milk because delivery trucks can not reach their farms.

Prime Minister Helen Clark said the extent of the floods could only be described as "a horror."

## Lithuanian lawmakers aim to boot president

**VILNIUS, Lithuania (AP)**—Lithuania on Wednesday moved closer toward a legislative vote of impeachment against its president, a former stunt pilot who was elected in a stunning upset last year.

A parliamentary commission concluded there were grounds to impeach Rolandas Paksas, including allegations he violated the constitution and his presidential oath.

The finding by the panel will trigger further investigations and court rulings before the parliament takes a final vote, expected in April, on whether to oust Paksas.

"Our job is done," said Commission Chairman Julius Sabatauskas. "Now lawmakers have to take the decision."

Paksas has denied all accusations saying his opponents are conspiring to force him out for political reasons. He has refused calls to resign.

To oust him, 85 deputies in the 141-seat parliament must vote to impeach. If he is dismissed, new presidential elections would be held 60 days later.

Lithuania's constitutional court recently ruled that Paksas acted illegally by arranging Lithuanian citizenship for Russian citizen Yuri Borisov, who police say has links to Russia's mafia.

Borisov has been a major financial backer of Paksas. The case jolted the ex-Soviet Baltic republic of 3.5 million residents that joins the European Union and NATO next year.

Last January, Paksas, a former stunt pilot, won the presidency, upsetting incumbent Valdas Adamkus, a 76-year-old former U.S. citizen who was the overwhelming favorite.



# Science & Technology

## Companies unveil toys interacting with TV



AP  
A Batmobile, which utilizes the new Video Encoded Invisible Light, or VEIL technology, is displayed at the Toy Fair in New York, Thursday, Feb. 10, 2004.

By ANNE D'INNOCENZIO  
AP BUSINESS WRITER

High-tech is marching into the toy box. There's the miniature Batmobile that revs its engine in sync with an animated version on TV. And the furry cat that sings along with a DVD or video.

Toy companies, hoping to compete with video and computer games, are marketing toys that interact with what children are watching on TV. But unlike some high-tech toys of the past that were too difficult to operate, manufacturers promise the latest versions are easy to use.

"Toy makers have been able to put more technology into the toy, and still enhance the play factor," said Tom Conley, president of the Toy Industry Association, the industry trade association. He estimates that about 70 percent of the new toys introduced at this week's American International Toy Fair, the industry product expo, will have some sort of microchip.

The new toys include:

- Serafina, from Mattel Inc., a furry toy cat named for a character in "The Princess and the Pauper," that sings and wags its tail in response to what's happening on the DVD or video that stars Barbie. The toy will retail for \$40.
- Hasbro's "Wheel of Fortune," which allows consumers using a handheld wireless device to actively compete with the contestants on the TV series in real time. If you beat the contestant, the TV sends a signal to download bonus games into your device. The

product is priced at \$29.99.

- Ohio Art's ETO, an electronic version of its Etch-a-Sketch, which retails for \$34.99, and uses the TV as its sketching tool. The system comes with its own control device that's hooked up to the TV and allows children to create their own original artwork, sound effects and maze games.
- Mattel's InteracTV, which allows children to interact and learn with their favorite characters from popular shows like "Blues Clues" and "Dora the Explorer," using the TV and a DVD player. The \$39.99 learning system from the company's Fisher-Price division comes with a wireless controller that uses sensors and touch-screen technology.

One of the latest technologies in toys, licensed by Mattel and Hasbro, is called Video Encoded Invisible Light, or VEIL, created by Veil Interactive Technologies. VEIL is a special process that alters the light levels of an image on TV. Humans can't detect it, but a photosensor on the toy picks up the signal, which then prompts the toy to react in a certain way.

Scott Miller, vice president of business development at Veil, said many toy companies were interested in adopting the technology, but the company was careful to launch it with what it considered "the best properties."

Mattel is using the VEIL technology initially in three of its Batman toys, but chairman and CEO Robert Eckert expects the company to use it in other toys as well.

Some of the high-tech toys sold in recent years, such as robotic dogs and other animals, were too complex for children. Eckert said this generation of toys is easier to play with.

"You can take technology too far, and it actually turns kids off," he acknowledged.

The Batman toys can receive signals from a new animated series called "The Batman," which will air this fall on two cable channels, Kids' WB! and The Cartoon Network. For example, the Batman action figure will start speaking phrases

at the exact moment the cartoon version does.

Hasbro's "Wheel of Fortune" also uses the VEIL technology. But Mattel's Serafina uses a less sophisticated technology that emits signals from the DVD or video to the toy cat through a small wireless transmitter that sits next to the TV. The cat, which reacts in 80 different ways each time the child plays the film, should be no more than 15 feet from the TV, according to Julia Jensen, a Mattel spokeswoman.

Some critics fear these toys may interfere with children's

play, limit their creativity and get them hooked to TV for a longer period of time.

"Instead of watching the television, they are now watching the doll watch the TV. When these kids watch a show, they don't want to be disturbed," said Stephanie Oppenheim, co-editor of Oppenheim Toy Portfolio, an independent guide to toys and other media.

She added: I'll be very interested to see how these toys do."

Oppenheim also said children like to use their own imagination, even when

watching TV, and she believes some of these new toys dictate "directed dramatic play."

Diedre Dennis Wachbrit, of Thousand Oaks, Calif., the mother of 4-year-old twins, said she doesn't know much about the toys, but, "it's important that my kids have balance and plenty of interaction with the natural world."

"If a toy helps facilitate that or teaches something like reading, then I like it. But if the toy distracts them from the real world, and fails to teach anything valuable, I'd say it's no better than TV, which isn't too good."

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Life & Style

Designer Tom Ford bids adieu to Gucci

MILAN, Italy (AP)—With a shower of rose petals for his tearful fans, Tom Ford presented his final collection Wednesday night for Gucci, the leather company he turned around 10 years ago to make it one of the most sought-after labels on the global fashion scene.

The 42-year-old American designer, a cult figure among fashion aficionados, is leaving the Gucci group in April after an impasse with the French partner company PPR.

The show's finale was a series of white jersey gowns, with plunging neckline and daring rear view, subtly held together by a jewel encrusted brooch. These were the same gowns that had sent the-then unknown designer to fashion fame in the early 1990's. The crowd jumped to their feet in thundering applause.

"You're free to do what you want to do!" went the runway lyrics as rose petals floated down over his fans. Hugs and kisses abounded.

The success of the Gucci label was a combination of Ford's talent, his personal charm, and his acute business sense. On the business side, he was flanked



Tom Ford gets a standing ovation as he takes the catwalk at the end of the unveiling of his last collection for Gucci for the Fall-Winter 2004/2005 fashions in Milan, Italy, Wednesday, Feb. 25, 2004.

by a soft spoken Italian lawyer, Domenico De Sole, CEO of the Gucci company. Together they formed a dynamite team.

"I feel a little sad tonight," De Sole said before the show in a space in a downtown Milan hotel.

De Sole and Ford split from PPR (Printemps, Pinault, Redoute) in the fall of 2003, after they could not agree on contract renewal terms. The partnership formally ends in April. Neither

designer nor businessman have immediate plans for the future.

Ford, who is a Hollywood favorite and was a child actor, in the past has said that he would like to try his hand in the movies, on the directing side.

"I would like to see him in the film business," said a teary-eyed Dawn Mello, who discovered Ford when she was working for Gucci in the early 1990s.

Ford can take all the time he

needs to plan his future. He leaves Gucci as a young, famous and rich man, whose stock options in the company alone are worth over \$250 million.

Speaking to reporters earlier Wednesday, fellow designer Donatella Versace expressed her regret that Ford was leaving the fashion scene.

"We will miss him," she said. "He put a lot of energy into Italian fashion."

New York gets taste of modern flamenco

NEWYORK (AP)—Spanish choreographer Maria Pages traveled to New York for her Joyce Theater debut but quickly transported her audience to the intimate land of flamenco.

Her long arms were barely visible Tuesday night as they snaked behind and above her head, catching the warm light of a single, dim lantern.

As the stage slowly brightened, Angel Munoz was facing Pages, his serpentine movements mirroring hers. Then he bent down to carry the lantern away, while Pages continued to dance—a reminder that, in flamenco, even men as fiery and talented as Munoz yield to women.

In the 11-member Compania Maria Pages, of course, other women yield to Pages, too. Widely recognized for her contributions to modern flamenco, her honors include Spain's prestigious National Dance Award, given in 2002, as well as the country's National Award for Choreography, for 1996's "El

Perro Andaluz. Burlerias."

Flamenco purists be warned: The work, inspired in part by Luis Bunuel's 1928 surrealist film, "Un Chien Andalou," mixes in snippets of other movement genres and is danced to, among others, a Tom Waits recording.

In one moment that could have been an early modern dance postcard, the women extended their arms straight above their heads, their bodies angular and fierce under simple, floor-length shifts of gray; Pages wore black.

Often severe, "El Perro Andaluz. Burlerias" also offers plenty of play. In one section, small spotlights illuminated what looked to be a trio of statuary; as the lights rose, three women strutted from behind glittering statues. Like dressmakers' mannequins come to life, the women stamped and twirled, scything the air with fringed shawls. Jose Maria Sanchez's lighting fell in bands across the floor, street light piercing the blinds of a closed shop.

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# Promoting Academy Awards a repetitive art

By ANTHONY BREZNICAN  
AP ENTERTAINMENT WRITER

CULVER CITY, Calif. (AP)—Artistic appreciation may be the motor that drives Hollywood’s awards season, but hype is the gasoline.

For the Oscars to remain relevant in an industry that defines projects in two ways—hits or flops—the show planners would like to entice about 55 million people to tune their televisions to ABC Sunday and watch celebrities win what are essentially high-gloss employee of the year prizes.

That’s the high-water mark from 1998, when “Titanic” was the big winner.

The marketing blitz this year has

included cable TV ads (unique because they urge viewers to change to a different channel), tie-ins with Oprah Winfrey’s show and a high-profile airline flight for this year’s Oscars from their factory in Chicago (a statuette was passed around the cabin for admiring passengers).

They even let the press into the Oscar theater to photograph the rehearsal seat markers to let fans know in advance what stars will be sitting where.

It’s all aimed at boosting the event’s TV ratings, which sagged to its lowest point of 33.1 million viewers last year, and the key is to put Oscar in front of people again and again and again.

Before dawn on Tuesday, Oscar telecast producer Joe Roth and actress

Julianne Moore, a four-time nominee who will present the editing trophy this year, arrived at a small television studio in Culver City for a promotional marathon.

Thirty interviews in three hours, to be exact.

The questions were fed to them through hidden earpieces, while their responses were beamed to TV stations from Tucson to Boston.

Roth and Moore fielded the same questions repeatedly, but they remained game—smiling and supplying an answer for the gazillionth time as if it were the first.

“If the lids go down,” Roth told Moore, his signature half-open eyes sinking closed, “just give me a ...” And

he nudged her with his elbow. “I’ll do the same for you.”

Among the most repeated questions: “Joe, what kind of surprises can we expect this year?”

“Well, ‘surprise’ and ‘expect’ are funny words to have in the same sentence,” he responded at one point, but he gave up pointing out paradoxes in favor of talking up host Billy Crystal’s multimedia comedy bits and the silly, rather than sappy, tribute to “The Pink Panther” filmmaker Blake Edwards.

Amid the tedium came a few flourishes. After about 10 versions of that question, a broadcaster asked what, specifically, Crystal had planned. “He’s going to take his top off,” Moore giggled.

When asked what it was like to

attend the Academy Awards, Moore became fond of answering: “It’s like the biggest prom in the world.” Or some variation thereof.

At least twice, she diplomatically deflected questions about whether she’d be surprised to win—because Moore isn’t nominated this year.

“It’s always so much fun, but for me the pressure is off because I’m just presenting,” she said the first time. The second time, she answered, pleasantly but pointedly: “I’m not nominated this year—so that would be a big surprise!”

When it was all finished, Moore told the Associated Press that such questions supply a healthy dose of humility: “It’s a good reminder that we are not the center of the universe.”

## Clear Channel cracks down on indecency

SAN ANTONIO (AP)—Radio giant Clear Channel Communications on Wednesday announced a “zero-tolerance” policy designed to keep indecent material out of broadcasts on its 1,200 or so radio stations.

The policy comes the day after the San Antonio company announced the firing of a Florida DJ whose sexually explicit morning show antics prompted a proposed \$755,000 fine from the Federal Communications Commission last month.

“Clear Channel is serious about helping address the rising tide of indecency on the airwaves,” Mark Mays, president and chief operating officer, said in a statement. “As broadcast licensees, we are fully responsible for what our stations air, and we intend to make sure all our DJs and programmers understand what is and what is not appropriate.”

The policy will include company wide training, possible fines against DJs, and automatic suspensions for anyone accused by the FCC of violating indecency rules on the air, company officials said.

“If the FCC accuses us of wrongdoing by issuing a proposed fine, we will take immediate action,” Mays said. “We will suspend the DJ in question, and perform a swift investigation. If we or the government ultimately determine the offending broadcast is indecent, the DJ will be terminated without delay.”

On Tuesday, Clear Channel announced that it agreed to fire a popular Tampa, Fla., radio talk show host known as Bubba the Love Sponge after deciding his raunchy show didn’t fit its standards.

The company said contracts with on-air performers are being modified to ensure that DJs share financial responsibility if they broadcast indecent material.

“From now on, every contract that Clear Channel enters into with on-air talent will include this provision,” said chief executive officer John Hogan. “While that won’t relieve Clear Channel from our responsibility as a broadcast licensee, we believe it will have a significant deterrent effect.”

The Clear Channel statement didn’t say whether it would appeal the

proposed FCC fine or pay it; spokesman Joel Lobello said he didn’t know.

The Bubba segments cited by the FCC ran 26 times on four Florida stations, and the commission proposed fining Clear Channel the maximum \$27,500 for each airing, or \$715,000. The company also was being fined \$40,000 for record-keeping violations.

The segments included graphic discussions about sex and drugs that were “designed to pander to, titillate and shock listeners,” the FCC said. One segment featured the cartoon characters such as George Jetson and Scooby Doo discussing sexual activities.

Messages left for the fired disc jockey with friends were not returned Tuesday.

The company’s action comes three weeks after the uproar created by the raunchy Super Bowl halftime show on CBS Feb. 1, which ended with singer Justin Timberlake tearing off part of Janet Jackson’s top and exposing her breast. The two performers said it was an accident. The incident touched off calls for stricter regulation by the FCC and larger fines.


### Shock jock Stern pulled off air

WASHINGTON (AP)—The nation’s largest radio station chain announced Wednesday it was suspending shock jock Howard Stern’s radio show after issuing new rules to limit indecency and address criticism of what airs on TV and radio.

Clear Channel Radio said it suspended broadcast of Stern’s show after assessing the content of his show Tuesday.

“Clear Channel drew a line in the sand today with regard to protecting our listeners from indecent content and Howard Stern’s show blew right through it,” John Hogan, president and CEO of Clear Channel Radio, said in a news release. “It was vulgar, offensive, and insulting, not just to women and African Americans but to anyone with a sense of common decency.”

Hogan said the show would not air on Clear Channel stations until officials are assured it will conform to acceptable broadcasting standards.



Stern

Attempts to reach Stern’s spokesman for comment late Wednesday were unsuccessful.

Under pressure from regulators and lawmakers, some TV networks are delaying live broadcasts to delete offensive material and doing more to let parents know how they can block specific programs. The National Association of Broadcasters says it will hold a conference on indecency next month.

The rules issued by Clear Channel Communications came on the eve of the second congressional hearing this month on broadcast indecency. Hogan is scheduled to testify along with top officials from TV networks.

Congress is considering increasing the maximum fine for indecency from \$27,500 to \$275,000, a move that the Federal Communications Commission endorsed even before the tumult over singer Janet Jackson’s exposed breast during the nationally televised Super Bowl halftime show.

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# Czechs hope for Academy Award glory

**PRAGUE, Czech Republic** (AP)—And the winner is ... “Zelary.” That’s what Czechs hope to hear at Sunday’s Academy Awards.

The wartime story of love and the art of accepting the inevitable is among the five nominees for best foreign-language film.

It’s another shot at Oscar glory for director and producer Ondrej Trojan. In 2001, a movie he produced, “Divided We Fall,” lost the foreign-language award to Ang Lee’s “Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon.”

This time, his chances of

winning look better, although the Canadian film “The Barbarian Invasion” is considered to be a front-runner.

“It’s a strong, human story, regardless of the time in which it is placed,” Trojan says of his film, set in the small mountain village of Zelary during World War II.

It’s the story of a clash of two different worlds—of the love of two completely different people in a beautiful place where everyday life often is ruled by the cruel laws of nature.

The film opens in 1943 in an unnamed town where, after the Nazis closed Czech universities, a medicine student named Eliska works as a nurse in local hospital.

She and her lover—a surgeon, Richard—along with another doctor from her hospital are active in the anti-Nazi resistance movement.

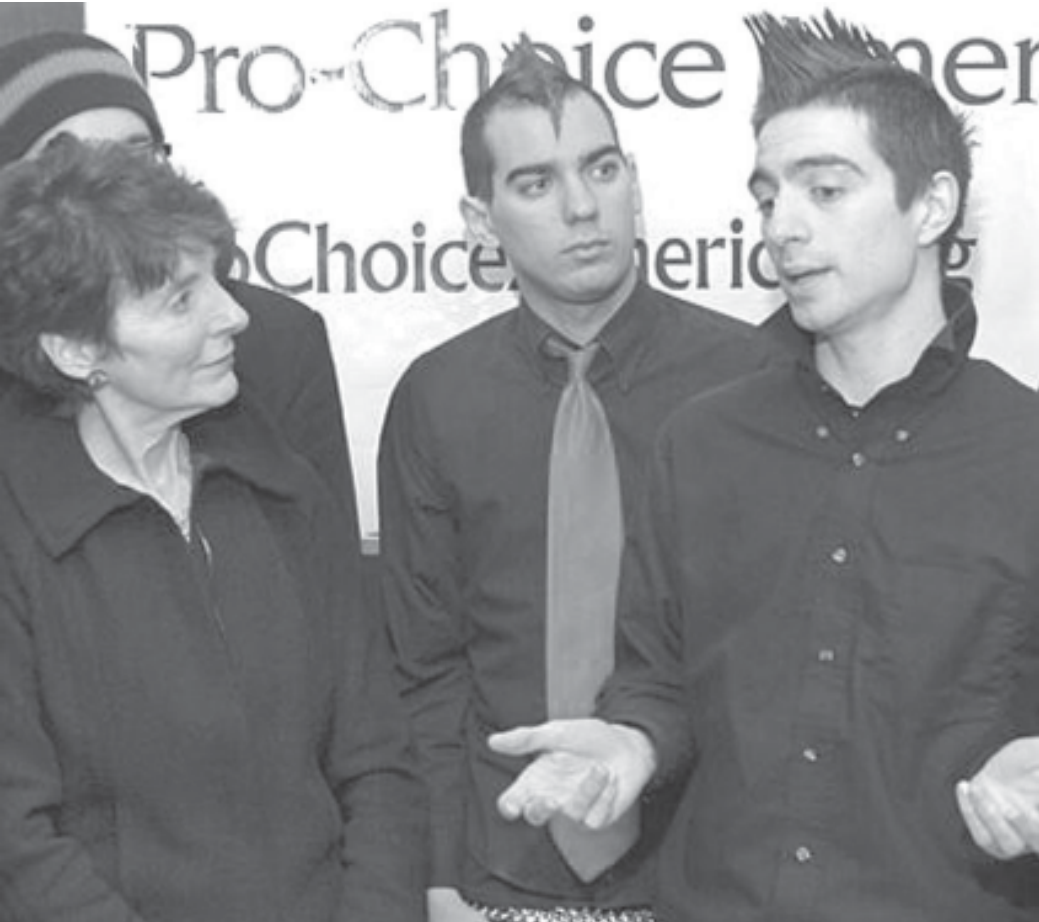
After the Gestapo starts hunting them, Eliska gets new identity and is sent with Joza, a patient whose life she helped to save, to his mountain village to hide.

In Godforsaken Zelary, the urban girl Eliska begins another life as Hana, the wife of simple and uneducated Joza, with whom she finally falls in love.

“For me, it’s about the strength of will to live and to accept or reject the fate,” said Ana Geislerova, who stars as Eliska and later Hana in the film.

“Sometimes to resist fate requires some heroism, but sometimes more heroism is needed to accept it.”

obit



AP  
NARAL Pro-Choice America President Kate Michelman, left, speaks with Chris #2 (cq), center, and Justin Sane, right, of PunkVoter.com as they announce the launch of a youth outreach partnership at the 9:30 Club in Washington, Thursday, Jan. 29, 2004.

## Punk-rock bands seek to register voters

**WASHINGTON** (AP)—Bleached-blond Mohawk? Check. Ripped and faded blue jeans? Check. Silver-studded dog collar? Check. Political science textbook? Check.

Pierced and tattooed rockers are in for a mosh-pit civics lesson this year. Nearly 200 bands are lining up to lambaste President Bush and try to register a half-million voters through the Punk Voter coalition.

These bands say they can harness votes from the average liberal-leaning but disenfranchised punk-rock fan with a combination of politically charged lyrics and constant reminders about civic duty in a time of war.

“If you don’t find yourself in the voting booth you may find yourself in combat boots in the desert,” said Justin Sane, guitarist and singer for Anti-Flag, one of Punk Voter’s most vocal members.

The bands are drumming their message home by inviting liberal groups like People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals and the abortion rights group NARAL Pro-Choice America to their concerts. A Web site offers election news and commentaries from former Dead Kennedys singer Jello Biafra, Jay Bentley from Bad Religion and Jim Lindberg from Pennywise.

Punk Voter’s roots stretch to the 2000 elections, when NOFX bass player Fat Mike suffered from insomnia after the Florida recount, where Bush defeated Al Gore by just 537 votes to win the presidency. He began calling colleagues in the music industry and soon launched a group with the dual purpose of motivating punk fans and unseating Bush in 2004.

“I’ve probably sold 50,000 records in Florida. If 500 of the fans had voted in 2000, it could have been a different election,” Fat Mike said.

Since then, NOFX has released a number of songs criticizing the administration. Its 2003 “The War on Errorism” album came with a computer video for “The Idiot Son of An ...,” a song consisting of one-line jabs at the president. Fat Mike also started getting involved with local politics, hosting a benefit concert last fall for San Francisco Green Party mayoral candidate Matt Gonzalez.

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# Faith and fury propel Gibson's 'Passion'

By **ANTHONY BREZNICAN**  
AP ENTERTAINMENT WRITER

**LOS ANGELES (AP)**—It's a clash of power, religion and history more fit for the apocalyptic Book of Revelation than the pages of Variety.

But this is a fight over a movie—a conflict that has allowed Mel Gibson to transform “The Passion of the Christ” from an obscure “career-killer” film into an international event that is already one of the most divisive movies of recent times.

“The Passion,” which depicts in gruesome detail the final hours of Christ's life, premieres in the United States on Feb. 25—Ash Wednesday on the Roman Catholic calendar. That's just one of the ways that Gibson, while preparing to release this intensely personal project, has built an audience on both faith and fury.

The Catholic movie star has restricted most early screenings to thousands of pastors, ministers and Christian leaders; urged use of “The Passion” for proselytizing; distributed movie tie-in sermons for Sunday morning services; encouraged grass-roots Internet promotional campaigns by Christian groups; and even sought the endorsement of the pope—although whether or not he received it remains in doubt.

But piety attracts less attention than controversy, in this case whether “The Passion” fosters anti-Semitism by unfairly blaming Jews for Christ's death.

The end result: A movie rejected by all the major studios, with subtitles to translate the Latin and Aramaic dialogue, is poised to be a hit.

“This is one of the biggest stories of the year, simply because of how unprecedented it is,” said Brandon Gray, proprietor of the box office tracker BoxOfficeMojo.com. “It's hard to fathom that a movie in two ancient languages, that is so religious and so focused on suffering and torture of somebody, would be a blockbuster.”

Gibson produced, directed and co-wrote “The Passion,” and spent \$25 million of his own money making it. Throughout the process, the Oscar-winning “Braveheart” director also has defended himself, his family and his film against ugly anti-Semitism accusations, insisting that the film is designed to “inspire not offend.”

These same accusations should ultimately boost the film's prospects.

No ad campaign could have received such attention. Besides the many evangelicals and believers who support the movie, now many skeptical and secular moviegoers are likely to buy tickets—no matter what the reviews—just to judge the product for themselves.

Abraham Foxman, head of

the Jewish civil-rights group the Anti-Defamation League, is one of them.

“I will probably see it again, to see if he changes anything. I'll buy a ticket and go see it,” said Foxman, one of the movie's most vociferous critics, who previously sneaked uninvited into a Florida theater during a screening for Christian clergy.

Foxman has asked Gibson to put a postscript on the movie to clarify that the story of Christ's death does not excuse anti-Semitism. Without that, the public debate serves as a kind of prescript, Foxman said, even if the side effect is drawing audiences to the film.

“The Passion” didn't always have such promise.

During filming in early 2003, Gibson joked publicly that it might be his “career-killer.” He had wanted to make the film since a spiritual crisis about 13 years ago, Gibson wrote in a December e-mail message to The Associated Press.

“I came to a difficult point in my life and meditating on Christ's sufferings, on his passion, got me through it,” wrote Gibson, who declined to be interviewed for this story. “Once I started meditating on the passion, really going deep into it in my own mind and heart, then I began to understand it, to believe: That's the version I put on film.”

Like any big money maker, Gibson, who became a superstar in the “Mad Max” and “Lethal Weapon” movies, is well-regarded by much of Hollywood. Yet aside from a handful of supporters, like Jack Valenti of the Motion Picture Association of America, few have come out publicly one way or the other.

The movie industry has a large Jewish population, although it's not particularly religious. And Hollywood's upper echelon may need Gibson's star power more than he needs them.

The filmmaker has denied the anti-Semitism claims, but—in what is either irony or shrewdness—he was the first to raise them.

Gibson granted one of his first interviews about “The Passion” to the Fox News channel in January 2003, appearing with the conservative commentator Bill O'Reilly. And both of them were bristling.

Gibson said that his work on “The Passion” had led reporters from “reputable publications” to try digging up dirt on him by questioning his then 85-year-old father. “You can pick on me,” Gibson said. “But if you start picking on my family ...”

It was a pre-emptive attack. No one had raised any concerns yet, beyond speculation that Gibson was pouring his talent into a certain flop.

Three months later, The New York Times Magazine quoted his father, Hutton



Jim Caviezel portrays Jesus Christ on the set of in the controversial new film “The Passion of the Christ,” in this Jan. 24, 2003 publicity photo. <sup>AP</sup>

## Jewish leaders, Vatican meet on 'Passion'

**VATICAN CITY (AP)**—A Jewish leader met with Vatican officials this week to ask them to restate church teachings on the Crucifixion, saying Mel Gibson's new film contradicts the church's position that the Jews as a people were not responsible for Jesus' death.

A top Vatican official who met with Abraham Foxman, national director of the Anti-Defamation League, said Wednesday that no such statement was planned. U.S. Archbishop John P. Foley, who heads the Vatican's social communications office, again praised the film, “The Passion of the Christ,” and said he found nothing anti-Semitic in it.

Foxman's visit to the Vatican came as debate over Gibson's depiction of the violent final hours of Christ's life intensified ahead of the

film's planned U.S. release Feb. 25. Jewish groups have said the film could fuel anti-Semitism; the Vatican has called it a recounting of the “historical fact of the passion of Jesus Christ according to the Gospel accounts.”

Foxman told a news conference Wednesday in Rome that the Roman Catholic Church had a responsibility to set the record straight on its own teachings about Christ's Passion, since many people who see the film may think it reflects official church teaching.

Foxman said that in his view, the film contradicts the church's landmark 1965 document “Nostra Aetate,” Latin for “In Our Time,” in which the Vatican deplored anti-Semitism in every form and repudiated the “deicide” charge that blamed Jews as a people for Christ's Crucifixion.

Foxman said Gibson's film

depicted the Jews as “blood-thirsty” villains who forced the Romans into Christ's Crucifixion.

“His film is an attack on Christian teaching. It is a revision, if you will, of ‘Nostra Aetate,’” Foxman said.

He called for the Vatican to ask bishops' conferences around the world to restate church teachings on the Crucifixion.

Foxman met this week with Foley as well as the Rev. Norbert Hofmann, secretary of the Vatican's commission for religious relations with Jews.

Foley said he had told Foxman that he had found nothing in the film that could be interpreted as anti-Semitic. “Certainly there are some Jews who call for punishment for Jesus,” Foley said. But he said the Romans too were depicted harshly.

not bear responsibility for Christ's death—as “a Masonic plot backed by the Jews.”

Since then, Mel Gibson has

chosen mainly to preach to the converted—like conservative pundit Peggy Noonan in the latest edition of Readers Digest.

“The Holocaust happened, right?” Noonan asked.

Even that softball question got Gibson in trouble. “Yes, of course. Atrocities happened. War is horrible,” Gibson said. “The Second World War killed tens of millions of people. Some of them were Jews in concentration camps.”

Rabbi Marvin Hier, dean of the Simon Wiesenthal Center in Los Angeles responded with a scathing letter: “To describe Jewish suffering during the Holocaust as ‘some of them were Jews in concentration camps’ ... feeds right into the hands of Holocaust deniers and revisionists.”

Gibson also talked to The New Yorker magazine about his movie and its critics—including Frank Rich, a New York Times columnist who accused Gibson of trying to “bait Jews and sow religious conflict.”

“I want to kill him,” Gibson told The New Yorker, regarding Rich. “I want his intestines on a stick.”

Despite such colorful responses to critics, Gibson has manipulated their concerns with a bait-and-tease routine—on one hand complaining that they shouldn't attack a movie without seeing it, and on the other banning them from screenings while sympathetic viewers see the picture by the thousands.

Many scholars, reporters and critics say Gibson has prevented them from viewing the film until Feb. 23, giving them just one day to print reviews.

“I've read that Gibson was still working on it, and certainly that's a legitimate reason not to show it—although I doubt that's the reason it's not being shown,” said Jean Oppenheimer, president of Los Angeles Film Critics Association. “A lot of films screen just for people who will give them a positive response ... It's too bad he can't be more inclusive.”

But Gibson's strategy is working—some Hollywood analysts speculate the film may earn its entire \$25 million production budget back in the first weekend, when it debuts on 2,000 screens.

That would be an astounding debut for a subtitled movie that lacks a major star (Jim Caviezel, from “The Count of Monte Cristo,” plays Jesus). Now the question is not whether “The Passion” will succeed, but whether it will break through to the mainstream.

“The key will be the curious nonbelievers,” said Gray of BoxOfficeMojo.com. He predicts a debut weekend of about \$15 million. Variety said it could go as high as \$30 million—far from the flop observers once predicted.

“They think I'm insane,” Gibson said at a Sept. 2002 press conference to announce his project. “Maybe I am, or maybe I'm a genius.”



# Norah Jones goes 'Home' with a million

By **NEKESA MUMBI MOODY**  
AP MUSIC WRITER

**NEW YORK** (AP)—Norah Jones' "Feels Like Home," the follow-up to her multiplatinum, Grammy-winning debut album, has sold over 1 million copies in its first week, the highest sales debut for an album since 2001.

No act has posted more than 1 million in sales since 'N Sync sold 1.9 million copies of "Celebrity" in the summer of 2001. "Feels Like Home" was released Feb. 10, and for the week ending Sunday, it sold 1,022,149 copies, according to Nielsen SoundScan.

"This is the kind of achievement that one can only expect from a truly original,

extraordinary artist like Norah," Bruce Lundvall, head of Blue Note Records, Jones' label, said Wednesday.

"It's not very often that an artist can span so many genres and enjoy such broad appeal. But that's what happens when the music is this good."

Jones' first album, "Come Away With Me," was a surprise hit when it was released in 2002. The album of folky jazz tunes wasn't expected to sell 100,000, but has now sold more than 8 million copies. It also won eight Grammys last year, including album of the year.

It continues to be a strong seller, and actually rose in sales, from about 43,000 in the previous week to 80,000 for the

week ending Sunday.

Jones' platinum debut eclipsed a strong debut from rapper Kanye West, whose acclaimed "College Dropout" sold about 441,000 copies.

The Jones record and the Grammys sent more people into record stores: Nielsen SoundScan reported it was the biggest selling week outside of a holiday season week since it began tracking sales in 1991. More than 17 million albums were sold last week, Nielsen SoundScan said.

Plenty of Grammy-winning artists enjoyed a spike in sales. OutKast's "Speakerboxxx/The Love Below," which won album of the year at the Feb. 8 ceremony, sold 275,000 compared with 111,000 a week earlier; Beyonce, who won the most trophies at five, sold 99,000 copies of "Dangerously in Love," up from 49,000 a week earlier.

Luther Vandross' "Dance With My Father," the winner of four Grammys, including song of the year for the title track, sold 58,000, up from 20,000.

Singer Norah Jones poses at Blue Note Records in New York, Jan. 29, 2004.

AP



WALLACE

## Travel agent sues Jackson over flight

**LOS ANGELES** (AP)—A travel agent sued Michael Jackson on Wednesday, claiming the pop star failed to pay her \$18,000 for the infamous charter jet flight that brought him from Las Vegas to Santa Barbara where he surrendered to authorities on child molestation charges.

The lawsuit adds to the litigation swirling around the flight. Jackson's defense team is suing the jet's owner, alleging that cameras were covertly installed on the aircraft, and that Jackson and his lead lawyer were secretly videotaped during the flight.

Cynthia Montgomery, who has handled Jackson's travel arrangements for three years, said in her lawsuit that their practice

was for her to pay for charter air travel in advance and be reimbursed by Jackson.

The lawsuit seeks \$50,000 in damages stemming from the alleged failure to pay for use of the jet, which was chartered from XtraJet of suburban Santa Monica.

Montgomery's lawyer, Robert T. Moore II, said he has been trying to negotiate payment with Jackson's attorneys but has gotten nowhere.

"They told us in so many words that we're not going to get paid," Moore said.

He said Montgomery had to pay for the plane up front because "Michael Jackson is kind of a slow pay and XtraJet would not deliver the jet without payment up front."

Jackson's attorney, Mark

Geragos, and his brother, lawyer Matthew Geragos—who has been negotiating with Moore—did not immediately return phone calls seeking comment Wednesday.

The Nov. 20 flight from Nevada to Santa Barbara Municipal Airport created earlier controversy when it was discovered that someone had secretly videotaped Jackson and Mark Geragos during the flight.

In a lawsuit filed in November against XtraJet, Geragos claimed that the charter company covertly installed two cameras in the plane's cabin. Jackson's attorneys won a temporary restraining order against XtraJet, barring any release of the tapes.

## 'Idol' host to take over LA radio show

**LOS ANGELES** (AP)—Ryan Seacrest will soon take over the popular local morning radio program that disc jockey Rick Dees hosted for more than two decades.

Seacrest, who hosts Fox's "American Idol" and replaced Casey Kasem on the syndicated "American Top 40" radio countdown, will host the daily KIIS-FM show from the same Hollywood studio he uses for his new syndicated live TV talk show, "On-Air with Ryan Seacrest."

The KIIS show also will be called "On-Air with Ryan Seacrest," station owner Clear Channel Communications said Wednesday.

Seacrest, a 29-year-old Atlanta native, confirmed the new radio gig on his TV show Wednesday during an interview with Britney Spears.

"I am honored and privileged to have the opportunity to become the host of the renowned KIIS-FM morning show," he said in a statement later. "I am looking forward to returning to daily radio."

Dees, 53, had hosted the KIIS morning show for 22 years, and hinted that he was forced out when he announced his departure Tuesday on-air. He'll continue to host his own "Weekly Top 40" radio program, which airs on KIIS and is internationally syndicated through Premier Radio Networks.

## Actors' unions approve contract extension

**LOS ANGELES** (AP)—The two unions representing big screen and television actors have agreed to a one-year extension of their current contract with studios in a deal that would give actors raises and unions the right to jointly bargain.

The Screen Actors Guild and the American Federation of Television and Radio Artists agreed to extend the labor pact that was set to expire June 30. It still requires ratification by members of both unions. If approved it would expire June 30, 2005.

The agreement gives actors

a 2.5 percent salary hike and requires members of the Alliance of Motion Picture and Television Producers to increase contributions to the actors' health plans by a half percent.

The pact also extends union coverage to performers who appear on programs shot using digital cameras on the UPN and WB networks.

The most important gain is the right for both actors unions to negotiate jointly on all terms and conditions for primetime dramatic television production. Talks will begin in the fall on a new three-year agreement.

Previously, SAG and AFTRA negotiated separately and often signed contracts with different levels of benefits, then competed against each other for who would represent actors on particular television shows.

"Most importantly, this extension locks down the right for SAG and AFTRA to negotiate all primetime dramatic programming together, giving the unions unprecedented leverage that we have not had since the advent of television," SAG President Melissa Gilbert said in a statement.



## Son's friends need quick course in common courtesy

By ABIGAIL VAN BUREN

**DEAR ABBY:** I have absolutely had it with some of my son's friends, and his girlfriend is no better.

I take my son and his friends places. The friends get into the car and never address me at all. It is like I'm invisible.

When the girlfriend calls, she asks for my son, but never asks me how I am doing or even says, "Hello, Mrs. Jones."

What is this world coming to? My children are not like that. People tell me how personable they are, and that they greet other adults courteously and with respect.

I have reached the point where I don't want my son to hang around with these kids, and I want the girlfriend gone.

Oh, by the way, the son I am talking about is a sophomore in high school. Any suggestions?



*Dear Abby*

SICK OF DISRESPECTFUL TEENS

**DEAR SICK:** Yes. Take the bull by the horns. The next time you're at the wheel and one of your son's friends gets into the car, say, "Hello, 'Johnny.' How are you?" Ask questions about school, sports, his parents. Break the silence and lighten the atmosphere. You're the adult—make the first move.

As to the girlfriend—it's possible that she hasn't been taught telephone manners. So be pleasant, and keep it light—but let her know that the way to a young man's heart is not only through his stomach, but can also be through his mother, and that one way to impress his mother is to slow down for a moment and say, "Hello, 'Mrs. Jones.' How are you? May I please speak to your son?"

.....

**DEAR ABBY:** I have a most embarrassing problem. My job requires me to make public appearances, and often I am "dressed to the nines." I admit, for dramatic purposes, I sometimes apply too much makeup. I have always been told I am beautiful, and I have even done some modeling.

Here's the dilemma: People think I am a man. Once I was cornered at a festival by an angry group of people who had been fired up by one drunkard's insistence that I was a drag queen. (Abby, I have children and I am definitely female.)

The first few times it happened, I tried to brush it off and regain my composure—once I stopped crying. But lately, it is getting ridiculous. I am mistaken for a cross-dresser even when I wear very little makeup. At 5-foot-7 and 120 pounds, I'm hardly manly. A week doesn't go by without this happening.

My boyfriend says I should blow it off—that people are jealous. My self-confidence is in the cellar and I'm at my wit's end. I have struggled with severe depression my whole life, and this isn't helping. A lot of the time I'd like to cower somewhere, but my job won't let me. Help!

CRYING IN PHOENIX

**DEAR CRYING:** It's difficult to give you an answer sight unseen, but let's analyze this. Drag queens are often known for their flawless makeup and their flamboyant manner of dress. Could this be a description of you? If the answer is "maybe"—then it's time for a fashion and image makeover.

*Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Write Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.*

*To receive a collection of Abby's most memorable—and most frequently requested—poems and essays, send a business-sized, self-addressed envelope, plus check or money order for \$5 (U.S. funds) to: Dear Abby—Keepers Booklet, P.O. Box 447, Mount Morris, IL 61054-0447. (Postage is included in the price.)*

## Jackson, ex-wife to settle family matter

By LINDA DEUTSCH  
AP SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

**LOS ANGELES (AP)**—Pop star Michael Jackson and his second wife have agreed to hire a retired judge to handle an unspecified "family law matter," perhaps to change the terms of the custody and visitation agreements of their two children.

In an order filed Friday, a judge approved an agreement reached by Jackson and Deborah Rowe on Jan. 27 to have retired Los Angeles Superior Court Judge Stephen M. Lachs preside over the case.

The matter is believed to concern custody and visitation

arrangements for the couple's two children—a boy, 7, and a girl, who is 5 or 6, who reportedly live with Jackson.

Lachs works with a center for alternative dispute resolution that allows parties in civil disputes to hire private judges.

In an interview with ABC's "Good Morning America" on Wednesday, Lachs said the case would be open to the public and the decision would be binding. He did not discuss details of the case.

Attorney Dana Cole, an expert in family law who is not involved in the case, said such a request would not be unusual with Jackson facing trial on child molestation charges.

"They hire private judges so that everything can be done behind closed doors," said Cole.

Rowe's attorney, Iris Finsilver, did not return a call for comment Tuesday. A call to Jackson attorney Lance Spiegel was answered by a recording saying Spiegel's law firm did not respond to media requests for comment.

Cole noted that the private judge's rulings would be as binding as if they were made in a regular family court.

Rowe and Jackson were married in 1996 in Sydney, Australia, after they announced that Rowe, who worked as a nurse for Jackson's plastic surgeon, was carrying the pop star's child.

She gave birth to a son, Prince Michael, 7, and the couple later had a daughter, Paris, who is 5 or 6. Jackson has a third child, Prince Michael II, who is believed to be about 10 months old, but he has not disclosed the identity of that boy's mother.

It was Prince Michael II who made headlines last year when Jackson dangled him from the balcony of a Berlin hotel for fans to see.

The marriage ended in 1999 after Rowe filed for divorce, citing irreconcilable differences. Jackson had previously been married to Lisa Marie Presley, daughter of Elvis Presley.

## Kidman, Penn movie to be filmed at UN



Australian actress Nicole Kidman, nominated for best actress in a drama for her work in *Cold Mountain*, arrives at the 61st Annual Golden Globe Awards on Jan. 25, 2004, in Beverly Hills, Calif.

**UNITED NATIONS (AP)**—Nicole Kidman slipped into the interpreters booth at the U.N. Security Council to prepare for her next movie role.

In March, Kidman and co-star Sean Penn begin filming "The Interpreter," a thriller about a U.N. translator who overhears a conversation that could cost her life.

The outside of the United Nations has appeared in numerous movies but Hollywood had been unsuccessful in getting permission to film inside for many years until director Sydney Pollack asked U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan last month.

Annan agreed in principle, and the presidents of the General Assembly and the Security Council then gave a green light for "The Interpreter" to be filmed inside the United Nations.

Kidman watched the interpreters in action Tuesday during a Security Council meeting on Iraq. She arrived and left the interpreters' booth above the council chamber without reporters or photographers noticing her.

"She was here this morning doing work with the interpreters as part of preparation for 'The Interpreter,'" a U.N. spokesman said, speaking on condition of anonymity.

U.N. interpreters do simultaneous translation in the six official languages at the United Nations—English, French, Spanish, Arabic, Russian and Chinese.

"The Interpreter" is scheduled for release in November.



Jane Clayson, seen in this undated publicity photo, was chosen to be Bryant Gumbel's on-air partner on the "Early Show."

## Former 'Early Show' host has no regrets

**PROVO, Utah (AP)**—Jane Clayson Johnson, former co-host of CBS' "The Early Show," told students at Brigham Young University, her alma mater, there's more to life than work.

"The most important job you'll ever have is in the walls of your own home," she told students Monday.

Johnson, a 1990 BYU graduate, served as co-host of "The Early Show" with Bryant Gumbel. When Gumbel decided to leave, she was reassigned in September 2002 as a news correspondent.

Then last year, hours after Mark Johnson proposed to her, she received a call from her agent with an offer for a four-year contract. Clayson and Johnson weighed her options, and she decided to move to Boston and start a family.

Johnson, 36, said her former life was glamorous and exciting, but it doesn't compare with daily life with her husband.

"I have no regrets about leaving," she said.

## Family won't let Cash song be used in ad

**NEW YORK (AP)**—Advertising writers in Florida were planning to pitch hemorrhoid-relief products with a commercial featuring Johnny Cash's classic song "Ring of Fire," but his family says there's no way they'll let it happen.

"We would never allow the song to be demeaned like that," Cash's daughter, singer Rosanne Cash, told The Tennessean in Sunday's editions.

"Ring of Fire" was written by Cash's wife, June Carter

Cash, and Merle Kilgore, who is now Hank Williams Jr.'s manager. Johnny Cash and June Carter Cash died last year.

TV producer Sula Miller of Big Grin Productions in Fort Lauderdale, Fla., said she came up with the idea when she was struggling with that uncomfortable medical condition and heard the song on the radio.

At the time, Kilgore said he thought the idea was funny, and that he often joked about hemorrhoids onstage whenever he'd introduce

"Ring of Fire," which includes the words "burns, burns, burns."

But Cash's family isn't laughing.

"He (Merle) started talking about this moronic tie-in without talking to any of us," Rosanne Cash told the newspaper. "The song is about the transformative power of love and that's what it has always meant to me and that's what it will always mean to the Cash children."

Kilgore said it wasn't his intention to upset the family.



Pastimes

**WONDERWORD**  
By DAVID OUELLET

HOW TO PLAY: All the words listed below appear in the puzzle — horizontally, vertically, diagonally, even backward. Find them and CIRCLE THEIR LETTERS ONLY. DO NOT CIRCLE THE WORD. The leftover letters spell the Wonderword.

MICROWAVE OVENS      Solution: 9 letters

C	A	C	Ⓚ	F	E	M	O	H	K	K	C	A	R	S
C	R	T	I	Ⓢ	A	K	L	I	M	O	T	T	O	B
R	O	E	A	T	Ⓢ	T	P	N	B	A	K	E	A	
E	E	N	T	E	S	Ⓢ	T	T	O	A	A	M	C	O
C	D	T	V	T	H	A	A	E	P	W	I	C	P	P
U	Y	O	A	E	U	I	L	P	R	N	E	T	O	E
A	B	A	N	W	N	B	L	P	U	S	I	R	E	N
S	S	U	R	E	A	I	E	T	S	O	E	L	R	T
R	L	A	R	T	A	L	E	O	N	C	E	O	S	T
E	P	I	N	N	A	S	R	N	I	C	C	A	S	I
M	S	R	C	T	S	I	O	P	T	P	O	O	S	A
I	U	E	I	E	E	T	E	R	O	R	V	P	W	
T	S	G	S	S	T	C	I	P	I	F	A	P	E	A
L	I	O	B	U	O	C	I	R	E	C	L	T	T	R
D	C	O	B	S	R	O	O	D	L	Y	E	E	S	M

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Accessories, Appliances, Apply, Bacon, Bake, Boil, Bottom, Burn, Butter, Button, Cobs, Container, Convenient, Cook, Cover, Defrost, Dice, Digital, Done, Door, Electric, Faster, Heat, Home, Kitchen, Milk, Minutes, Open, Option, Plastic, Popcorn, Power, Rack, Recipe, Rice, Roast, Sauce, Slice, Start, Steps, Stir, Time, Tray, Turntable, Uses, Wait, Warm, Water, Wrap.

Yesterday's Answer: Confident

NOTE: Postage and handling charges have changed for The Colossal Wonderword. Add \$5 for the first book ordered, \$1 more for each additional book. Volume 17 and 18 are \$5 each, available to Universal Press Syndicate, Send to WONDERWORD, 4825 Main St., Kansas City, Mo. 64111 or call toll-free 1-800-255-6734, ext. 6013.

**CROSSWORD** By Eugene Sheffer

**ACROSS**

1 Tray contents  
4 Porcine parents  
8 Use a kiln  
12 Miss Piggy's pronoun  
13 Drudgery  
14 Wading bird  
15 Highly excited  
17 Iodine source  
18 Recede for one  
19 Crystal, for one  
20 Ignite  
22 "— See for Miles"  
24 Choir voice  
25 Quite quickly  
29 "Bravo!"  
30 Ghana's capital  
31 Prior to  
32 Lined up  
34 Hemsley sitcom  
35 Internet addresses  
36 Sends forth

37 "West Side Story" song  
40 Cereal choice  
41 Exam format  
42 Soon  
46 Scooted  
47 Hero's home?  
48 "Sesame Street" Muppet  
49 Loses rigidity  
50 Spotted  
51 Continental abbr.

3 Long-fellow subject  
4 Offend olfactorily  
5 Leak slowly  
6 Whom to "ease on down the road" to see  
7 Crafty  
8 Marshall Islands atoll  
9 The third man  
10 Slay  
11 Catch sight of  
16 Poi base  
19 Mexican peninsula, familiarly

20 Ganges garment  
21 Blueprint  
22 Ear bone  
23 Give a darn  
25 Reykjavik's land (Abbr.)  
26 Render womanly  
27 Worry  
28 Longings  
30 Emanation  
33 Bee products?  
34 Asian nurse  
36 Gen. Rommel  
37 Tackles the lawn  
38 Neighborhood  
39 Resounded  
40 Hoedown seating  
42 Picks out of a lineup  
43 Born Bud's partner  
45 Always

**DOWN**

1 "— Blue?"  
2 Trinity member

**Solution time: 25 mins.**

F	L	A	G		A	B	C		S	A	I	L		
L	I	M	O		V	A	L		C	I	T	E		
O	R	E	O		O	N	E		U	R	S	A		
G	A	N	D	H	I		A	B	B	E				
				B	A	D	E	N	B	A	D	E	N	
C	L	O	Y	S		R	E	C		A	D	E		
H	A	V	E		H	I	D		O	L	G	A		
O	V	A		D	O	C		S	N	E	E	R		
W	A	L	L	A	W	A	L	L	A					
				T	U	B	E		Y	O	W	L	E	D
O	P	T	E		V	I	T		H	U	G	E		
R	A	N	G		E	O	N		I	R	O	N		
O	L	E	O		R	U	G		M	E	S	S		

Yesterday's answer 2-20

1	2	3		4	5	6	7		8	9	10	11
12				13					14			
15				16					17			
			18						19			
20	21					22	23					
24					25					26	27	28
29				30						31		
32			33							34		
			35						36			
37	38	39					40					
41					42	43					44	45
46					47					48		
49					50					51		

**STUMPED?** For answers to today's crossword, call 1-900-226-5955! 99¢ per minute, touch-tone/rotary phones. (18+ only.) A King Features service, NYC.

**CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY**  
Cindy Crawford, Andrew Shue, Brian Littrell, Ivana Trump

**HAPPY BIRTHDAY:** You may be sidetracked by an emotional problem that has been hanging over your head. Rid yourself of past issues so you can move forward. Change is in the offing, so clear your concerns. The turn of events will be much greater than even you can imagine. Your numbers are 6, 17, 22, 35, 41, 44

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**ARIES** (March 21-April 19)  
Regardless of what you had planned on getting done today, you will find it difficult. Nothing will be as it appears. Make your own decisions if you want to be happy with the outcome. ★★★

**TAURUS** (April 20-May 20)  
Don't give in to the demands being put on you. You are right and you must not doubt yourself for even one minute. Patience will pay off big time. ★★★★★

**GEMINI** (May 21-June 20)  
Put your time and effort into learning something new rather than trying to convince everyone to do things your way. Someone will try to meddle in your affairs, which could break a long-time friendship. ★★

**CANCER** (June 21-July 22)  
You will be in the mood to get things done, so don't waste time. Join groups that can offer you as much as you can offer them. Relationships developed today will be satisfying. ★★★★★

**LEO** (July 23-Aug. 22)  
Go back over your personal papers to guarantee the tax breaks to which you're entitled. Make adjustments that will lead to a higher income or better return on your money. ★★★

**VIRGO** (Aug. 23-Sept. 22)  
Listen to the grievances of both your business and emotional partner. You can make a difference and build a strong alliance if you are patient. Don't let your own emotions get in the way. ★★★

**LIBRA** (Sept. 23-Oct. 22)  
It's time to center yourself and determine what will make you feel the most relaxed. Once you have mastered a state of calm, you will be able to perform your duties with excellence. ★★★

**SCORPIO** (Oct. 23-Nov. 21)  
Love relationships will develop if you are single. If you are in a relationship, you can certainly rekindle the flame. You will develop an idea you have wanted to pursue for some time now. ★★★★★

**SAGITTARIUS** (Nov. 22-Dec. 21)  
Not everything will be as it appears today. Don't trust what you are told. Someone will be leaving out some vital information that could make a difference to the choices you make. ★★

**CAPRICORN** (Dec. 22-Jan. 19)  
Conversations will be packed full of new thoughts and ideas today. It's time for you to follow your heart and your dreams. ★★★★★

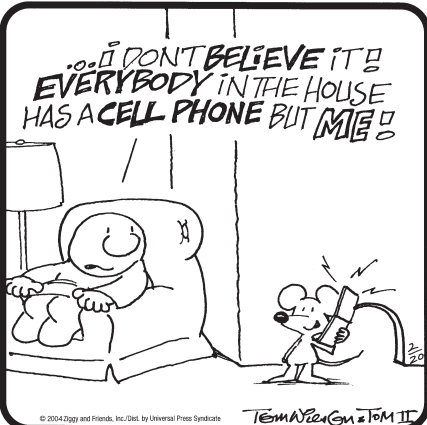
**AQUARIUS** (Jan. 20-Feb. 18)  
If you want to make a work change, this is probably the time. Don't waste time procrastinating — set your goals high and shoot for the stars. ★★★

**PISCES** (Feb. 19-March 20)  
You may be feeling a little stressed out today. It may be time to backtrack and readdress what it is you are willing to do so you can move forward. ★★

**BIRTHDAY BABY:** You are sensitive and can get what you want by using emotional tactics. You are influential, intuitive and can make things happen. You have a vivid imagination and creative talent.

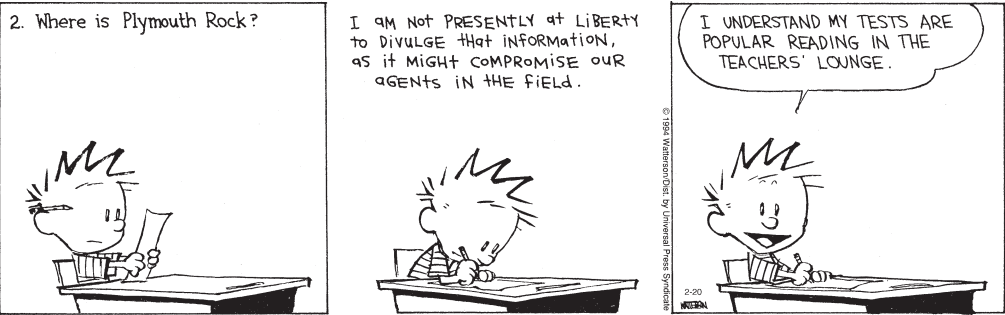
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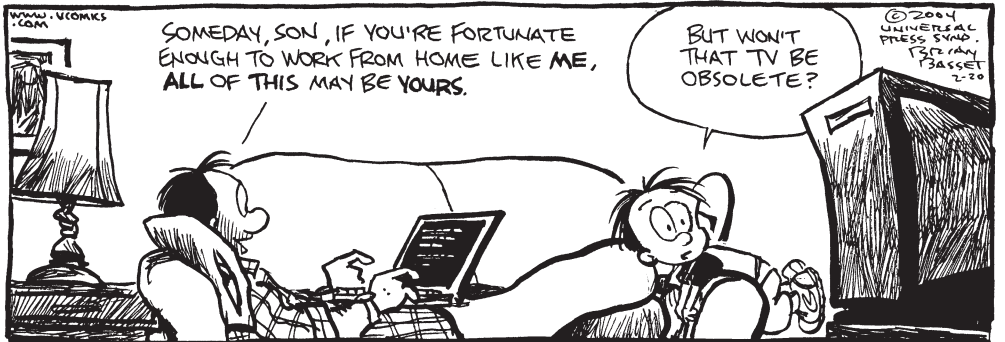
Calvin and Hobbes

By Bill Watterson



Adam@home

By Brian Basset



Garfield®

by Jim Davis



The Duplex

By Glenn McCoy





# Pastimes



NBA STANDINGS					
EASTERN CONFERENCE					
Atlantic Division					
	W	L	Pct	G	
New Jersey	39	25	.609	-	
Philadelphia	37	26	.587	1 1/2	
Boston	37	27	.578	2	
Orlando	33	33	.500	7	
Washington	31	33	.484	8	
New York	28	36	.438	11	
Miami	21	43	.328	18	
Central Division					
Detroit	40	23	.635	-	
Indiana	38	27	.585	3	
New Orleans	37	29	.561	4 1/2	
Milwaukee	32	33	.492	9	
Atlanta	26	39	.400	15	
Chicago	23	43	.348	18 1/2	
Toronto	20	42	.323	19 1/2	
Cleveland	11	53	.172	29 1/2	
WESTERN CONFERENCE					
Midwest Division					
Dallas	48	15	.762	-	
San Antonio	45	18	.714	3	
Minnesota	42	25	.627	8	
Utah	37	27	.578	11 1/2	
Houston	33	30	.524	15	
Memphis	23	41	.359	25 1/2	
Denver	14	51	.215	35	
Pacific Division					
Sacramento	45	19	.703	-	
Portland	42	22	.656	3	
L.A. Lakers	35	28	.556	9 1/2	
Phoenix	33	30	.524	11 1/2	
Golden State	31	33	.484	14	
Seattle	28	34	.452	16	
L.A. Clippers	20	44	.313	25	

NBA STANDINGS		
EASTERN CONFERENCE		
Atlantic Division		
Team	W	L
New Jersey	31	14
Boston	26	19
Philadelphia	24	22
Orlando	24	23
Washington	22	24
New York	19	25
Miami	16	29
Central Division		
Indiana	33	13
Detroit	29	15
New Orleans	24	22
Milwaukee	22	22
Chicago	17	28
Atlanta	17	29
Toronto	11	34
Cleveland	9	37
WESTERN CONFERENCE		
Midwest Division		
Dallas	35	9
San Antonio	29	16
Minnesota	27	18
Utah	27	18
Houston	24	20
Memphis	13	31
Denver	10	35
Pacific Division		
Sacramento	32	14
Portland	28	16
Phoenix	26	21
L.A. Lakers	20	23
Seattle	20	23
Golden State	20	24
L.A. Clippers	17	28

NBA STANDINGS		
EASTERN CONFERENCE		
Atlantic Division		
Orlando	2	0
New Jersey	1	0
Philadelphia	1	1
Boston	0	1
Miami	0	1
New York	0	1
Washington	0	1
Central Division		
Chicago	1	0
Detroit	1	0
Indiana	1	0
Toronto	1	0
New Orleans	0	0
Atlanta	0	1
Cleveland	0	1
Milwaukee	0	1
WESTERN CONFERENCE		
Midwest Division		
Dallas	1	0
Minnesota	1	0
San Antonio	1	0
Utah	0	0
Denver	0	1
Houston	0	1
Memphis	0	1
Pacific Division		
Sacramento	1	0
Portland	1	0
Golden State	0	0
L.A. Clippers	0	0
Phoenix	0	0
Seattle	0	0
L.A. Lakers	0	2
Wednesday's Games		
Chicago 99, Boston 96		
Indiana 91, Houston 82		
Toronto 74, Washington 68		
Philadelphia 95, Milwaukee 93		
Orlando 100, Miami 86		
New Jersey 105, Atlanta 94		
Dallas 119, Memphis 108		
Minnesota 83, Denver 77		
Detroit 86, New York 77		
Portland 102, L.A. Lakers 90		

Team	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	T
Giants	0	1	0	0	0	0	2	-	3	
Hustlers	1	0	1	4	2	0	0	5	-	13







**SPORTS BRIEFS**





**Spurs defeat Mavericks, 111-104**

Tony Parker scored a career-high 32 points, including seven free throws in the final minute, to lead the San Antonio Spurs to a 111-104 win over the division rival Dallas Mavericks on Wednesday night.

48

Saipan Tribune  
**Sports**

**Yearend RGA champion tourney tomorrow**

The Refaluwasch Golf Association will hold their yearend Club Champion Tournament tomorrow, December 14, at the Lao Lao West golf course.

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